PAUL GUYER & ROLF-PETER HORSTMANN

IDEALISM IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

OXFORD

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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First Edition published in 2023

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022945794

ISBN 978–0–19–284857–4 (hbk.)
ISBN 978–0–19–284858–1 (pbk.)

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192848574.001.0001

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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Preface

We offer here an introduction to idealism in modern philosophy. We focus on idealism in epistemology and metaphysics, largely excluding idealism in moral and political philosophy and idealism as a broader social movement, and we focus on philosophical concepts, theses, and arguments for and against them rather than speculating on historical causes for the development, acceptance, or rejection of such philosophical content. In other words, this is a work in the history of philosophy, not intellectual history. We do talk about motives for idealism, however, but what we mean by that is chiefly arguments; that is, our topic is both full-blown and self-identified idealism in modern philosophy, meaning by that philosophical views according to which reality is ultimately mental in some form or other, but also approaches and arguments characteristic of idealism, particularly in epistemology, that have been adopted and accepted by philosophers and philosophies that do not identify themselves as idealist because they are not committed to the reduction of reality to the mental, or to idealism as metaphysics. Unlike some previous writers, we do not distinguish epistemological and metaphysical idealism as two species of idealism, but we do distinguish epistemological and metaphysical arguments for idealism, and argue that the former have been much more widely appropriated and accepted in modern philosophy, including the so-called analytic philosophy of the twentieth century, even though that originated in some good part as a critique of avowed idealism in late nineteenth-century Britain, than is often recognized.

This book is a significant revision and expansion of our entry on "Idealism" in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. In that encyclopedia article, we perforce eschewed extensive reference to and debate with secondary literature on the primary sources that we discussed. In the present work, with the continued aim of providing an accessible introduction to the topic of idealism, we likewise eschew explicit debate with other commentators, but we have added references to literature that we think will help readers dig more deeply into the material that we discuss and lead them further into the extensive literature on the philosophers and topics that we discuss. We have provided these references with parentheses in the text

rather than in foot- or endnotes, using the author-date method of citation. The references to the works cited as well as to other useful works will be found in the bibliography, which is divided into two sections covering primary and secondary sources respectively.

Since our work originally appeared in the *Stanford Encyclopedia*, our first debt of gratitude is naturally to the editors of that work, led by Ed Zalta, both for the original invitation to produce the entry and for permission to reuse the material from our entry. The *Stanford Encyclopedia*, a non-profit enterprise, has done a profound service for both professional philosophers and a wider readership of students and interested readers for several decades now, and has always had a generous policy allowing authors to publish their material in other formats as well. We worked on this entry following Guyer's appointment at Brown University in 2012, developing our approach in several seminars that we taught jointly at Brown made possible by Horstmann's repeated appointments as a Visiting Professor at Brown. We are grateful to the Humanities Initiative at Brown, to Kevin McLaughlin, Dean of Faculty at Brown during this period, and to the Brown Department of Philosophy for their enthusiastic and generous support of these visits. We hope that this book repays this generosity at least to some degree. We are also grateful to several colleagues who participated in these seminars or otherwise discussed this work with us, especially Justin Broackes and Charles Larmore, and to the Brown students who participated in the seminars.

We would also like to thank jointly the late Margaret Dauler Wilson, who brought us together as participants in the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute in Early Modern Philosophy that she directed in 1974; that was the beginning of what we hope has proven to be a fruitful professional relationship and what we know has been a treasured friendship of nearly fifty years. And we would like to thank severally Dieter Henrich, who was Horstmann's teacher from the beginning of his university studies in Berlin to the completion of his doctoral work in Heidelberg, and who brought Guyer's studies in Kant to a new level when he made his first visit to Harvard in the spring of 1973, Guyer's last semester in graduate school. As a teacher, mentor, and in Horstmann's case later a colleague in Munich, and through his vast array of published works, he has been an inspiration for both of us as we worked on the topic of idealism.

Finally, we are grateful to Sydney Dever Mendenhall for her generous and exacting assistance with the proofreading of this book.

Paul Guyer (Brown University), Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

1
Introduction

The terms "idealism" and "idealist" are by no means used only within philosophy; they are used in many everyday contexts as well. Optimists who believe that, in the long run, good will prevail are often called "idealists." This is not because such people are thought to be devoted to a philosophical doctrine but because of their outlook on life generally; indeed, they may even be pitied, or perhaps envied, for displaying a naive worldview and not being philosophically critical at all. Even within philosophy, the terms "idealism" and "idealist" are used in different ways, which often makes their meaning dependent on the context. However, independently of context one can distinguish between a descriptive (or classificatory) use of these terms and a polemical one, although sometimes these different uses occur together. Their descriptive use is best documented by paying attention to the large number of different "idealisms" that appear in philosophical textbooks and encyclopedias, ranging from metaphysical idealism through epistemological and aesthetic to moral or ethical idealism. Within these idealisms one can find further distinctions, such as those between subjective, objective, and absolute idealism, and even more obscure characterizations such as speculative idealism and transcendental idealism. It is also remarkable that the term "idealism," at least within philosophy, is often used in such a way that it gets its meaning through what is taken to be its opposite: as the meaningful use of the term "outside" depends on a contrast with something considered to be inside, so the meaning of the term "idealism" is often fixed by what is taken to be its opposite. Thus, an idealist is sometimes taken to be someone who is not a realist, not a materialist, not a dogmatist, not an empiricist, and so on. Given the fact that many also want to distinguish between realism, materialism, dogmatism, and empiricism, it is obvious that thinking of the meaning of "idealism" as determined by what it is meant to be opposed to leads to further complexity and gives rise to the impression that underlying such characterizations lies some polemical or, at least, critical intent.

Within modern philosophy there are generally taken to be two fundamental conceptions of idealism:

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
© Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann 2023. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192848574.003.0001

1. Something mental (the mind, spirit, reason, will) is the ultimate foundation of all reality, or even exhaustive of reality, and everything considered to be "real" must be taken to be a manifestation of something mental (even the mental itself).
2. Although the existence of something independent of the mind is conceded, everything that we can *know* about this mind-independent "reality" is held to be so permeated by the creative, formative, or constructive activities of the mind (of some kind or other) that all claims to knowledge must be considered, in some sense, to be a form of self-knowledge, understood as knowledge that is rooted in contributions by the subject of knowledge.

Idealism in sense (1) has been called "metaphysical" or "ontological idealism," while idealism in sense (2) has been called "formal" or "epistemological idealism." The modern paradigm of idealism in sense (1) might be considered to be George Berkeley's "immaterialism," according to which all that exists are ideas and the minds, less than divine or divine, that have them. (Berkeley himself did not use the term "idealism," which entered English usage from German only later.) The fountainhead for idealism in sense (2) might be the position that Immanuel Kant asserted (if not clearly in the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781] then in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* [1783] and in the "Refutation of Idealism" in the second edition of the *Critique*) according to which idealism does "not concern the existence of things," but asserts only that our "modes of representation" of them, above all space and time, are not "determinations that belong to things in themselves" but features of our own minds. Kant called his position "transcendental" and "critical" idealism, and it has also been called "formal" idealism. However, Kant's position is complicated. He argues that space and/or time are the necessary forms for our experience of all objects and events—space and time in the case of external objects and events, time only in the case of inner states; this is what he calls "empirical realism." Our knowledge of space and time in mathematics, particularly geometry, is the foundation of all ordinary experience and natural science. But in order to maintain that we have a priori knowledge of this fact and of the properties of space and time, as in geometry, Kant argues that space and time *cannot* be properties of things as they are in themselves, so must be features *only* of our own representations of things—this is what he calls the "transcendental ideality" of space and time, leading to his doctrine of "transcendental idealism." Yet Kant never sees any reason to deny

the *existence* of things as they are in themselves, distinct from our representations of them, or things in themselves for short, and for this reason he vigorously rejects the assimilation of his position to that of Berkeley, which he regards as idealism proper, or "dogmatic idealism." Kant's position is thus an amalgam of idealism and realism, not a straightforward version of idealism at all. And it contains one important lesson for thinking about idealism: a view that we know things from our own human point of view can become a trivial or anodyne tautology that we know things in the way that we know them, not a form of idealism at all, unless it is accompanied with some reason to believe that there must be some *difference* between the way that we know or represent things and the way that they are in themselves—the view that Kant held regarding the "transcendental ideality" of space and time. In the absence of such a claim, many philosophical positions that might look like "epistemological idealism" turn out not to be versions of idealism after all.

So we will not treat metaphysical and epistemological idealism as two forms of idealism. Instead, we draw a distinction between metaphysical and epistemological *arguments* for idealism, where idealism is always understood to be a metaphysical doctrine, namely that everything that exists is in some way mental. We thus agree with A. C. Ewing, who wrote in 1934 that all forms of idealism

> have in common the view that there can be no physical objects existing apart from some experience, and this might perhaps be taken as the definition of idealism, provided that we regard thinking as part of experience and do not imply by "experience" passivity, and provided we include under experience not only human experience but the so-called "Absolute Experience" or the experience of a God such as Berkeley postulates.
>
> (Ewing 1934: 3)

In other words, while reducing all reality to some kind of human *perception*, if that is understood passively, is one form of idealism, it is not the only form—reality may be reduced to the mental understood to involve activity as well as passivity, or understood to comprise non-human as well as human mentality. Thus Willem deVries's more recent definition of idealism as the general theory that reduces reality to some form or other of the mental is just:

> Roughly, the genus comprises theories that attribute ontological priority to the mental, especially the conceptual or ideational, over the non-mental.
>
> (deVries 2009: 211)

We also agree with Jeremy Dunham, Iain Hamilton Grant, and Sean Watson when they write that

> the idealist, rather than being anti-realist, is in fact . . . a realist concerning elements more usually dismissed from reality.
>
> (Dunham, Grant, and Watson 2011: 4)

These elements comprise minds of some kind or other. Idealism is understood in contrast to materialism; while the materialist denies the reality of mind as anything more than some property of matter, the idealist denies the mind-independent reality of matter, but hardly denies the reality of mind (or, on their account, which goes back to Plato, Ideas or Forms as well as minds; however, we will not be considering pre-modern forms of idealism in any detail).

We will thus follow Ewing (see his chapters II, IV–V, and VIII) in distinguishing metaphysical from epistemological arguments for idealism. Metaphysical arguments proceed by identifying some general constraints on existence and arguing that only minds of some sort or other can satisfy such conditions; epistemological arguments work by identifying some conditions for knowledge and arguing that only objects that are in some sense or other mental can satisfy the conditions for being known. In particular, epistemological arguments for idealism assume that there must be a *necessary* isomorphism between or even an identity of knowledge and its object that can obtain only if the object of knowledge is itself mental; we propose that this claim of necessary identity between knowledge and what is known is the difference between epistemologically motivated idealism and the metaphysically neutral position that might be associated with philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap, W. V. O. Quine, and Donald Davidson or even with Kant's realism with regard to the *existence* of things in themselves. Many twentieth-century philosophers such as those mentioned have held that of course we always know things from our own point of view, but consider any question about whether or not our point of view "corresponds" to independent reality an "external" question, as Carnap put it, which is either meaningless or is at least not answerable on theoretical grounds. That is, they may see no reason to positively affirm that reality must match our way of representing it, but neither do they admit any reason to *deny* this—their stance is to avoid metaphysics altogether precisely by omitting any claim to necessary identity between knowledge and the known. Indeed, that premise might be regarded as crucial for either idealism or materialist realism as metaphysical

doctrines, for Tom Rockmore has recently argued that materialist doctrines since the time of Parmenides have also been based on the premise of a necessary identity between knowledge and the known (Rockmore 2021)—the difference is just that in the case of materialism, a view about the nature of the object of knowledge is transferred to the conception of knowing and the knower on the basis of the presumed identity, while in the case of idealism the conception of the nature of knowledge and the knower is transferred to the conception of the object of knowledge on the basis of the same presumed identity.

It is in order to preserve the distinction between traditional idealism and positions such as those of Carnap, Quine, and Davidson, or "conceptual" and "linguistic idealists" such as Nicholas Rescher and Thomas Hofweber (Rescher 1973; Hofweber 2017), all of which might be considered expressions of the default position in twentieth-century philosophy held by all but "naive realists" who believe that we necessarily represent reality exactly as it is, that we define idealism by the claim that reality is in some way or other fundamentally mental while recognizing epistemological arguments for idealism as a metaphysical doctrine rather than epistemological idealism as a distinct form of idealism. Of course metaphysical and epistemological arguments for idealism can be combined by a single philosopher. As we will see, Berkeley does so, and so does Kant in arguing for the transcendental idealist part of his complex position. Others separate them, for example in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British philosophy F. H. Bradley and J. McT. E. McTaggart constructed metaphysical arguments for idealism, while in the same period the Americans Josiah Royce and Brand Blanshard offered epistemological arguments for idealism.

In what follows, we will concentrate mainly on the discussion of philosophical theories that either endorse or claim to endorse idealism on ontological and/or epistemological grounds. At some points in its complex history, however, above all in the social as well as philosophical movement that dominated British and American universities in the second half of the nineteenth century and through World War I, idealism in either of its philosophical forms was indeed connected to idealism in the popular sense of progressive and optimistic social thought. This was true for figures such as Bradley and Royce and their predecessors and contemporaries such as Thomas Hill Green and Bernard Bosanquet. There has recently been considerable interest in British or more generally anglophone idealism as a movement in social philosophy, or even a social movement, but that aspect of modern idealism will remain beyond our purview here, even if in some

ways that might be its most important aspect (see treatments of idealism as a moral, political, and social movement: Mander 2011; Boucher and Vincent 2012; Mander ed. 2000; and Mander and Panagakou eds. 2016).

Our distinction between the view that epistemological and ontological idealism are two distinct forms of idealism, which we reject, and the view that that there are distinct metaphysical and epistemological arguments for idealism, which we accept (which is not to say that we will be endorsing these arguments themselves!), has not always been clearly made. However, Josiah Royce, in many ways the leading spokesman for idealism in the history of American philosophy (see Flower and Murphey 1977: ch. 12; Kuklick 1977: chs. 8, 14–16; Kuklick 1985a; Oppenheim 2005), pointed in the direction of our distinction at the end of the nineteenth century. On Royce's definitions, epistemological idealism

> involves a theory of *the nature of our human knowledge*; and various decidedly different theories are called by this name in view of one common feature, namely, the stress that they lay upon the "subjectivity" of a larger or smaller portion of what pretends to be our knowledge of things.
>
> (Royce 1892: xii–xiii)

Metaphysical idealism, he says, "is a theory as to *the nature of the real world*, however we may come to know that nature" (Royce 1892: xiii), namely a theory, as he says quoting from another philosopher of the time, based on the

> belief in a spiritual principle at the basis of the world, without the reduction of the physical world to a mere illusion.
>
> (1892: xiii; quoting Falckenberg 1886: 476)

This looks like a straightforward distinction between epistemological and metaphysical versions of idealism. But Royce then argued that epistemological idealism ultimately entails a foundation in metaphysical idealism, in particular that "the question as to how we 'transcend' the 'subjective' in our knowledge," that is, the purely individual, although it exists for both metaphysical realists and idealists, can only be answered by metaphysical idealists (Royce 1892: xiv). We will argue similarly that while epistemology can entail idealism, on the assumption that the identity of knowledge and the known must be in some sense necessary and that this can be so only if the known as well as knowledge is in some sense mental, this should be distinguished from

the more general and extremely widespread view that our knowledge is always formed within our own point of view, conceptual framework, or web of belief. This view may well be, as we have suggested, the default position of much twentieth-century philosophy, "continental" as well as "analytic," but it does not by itself entail that reality is essentially mental.

Our distinction between epistemological and metaphysical arguments for idealism can also be associated with a more general distinction between two major kinds of motives for idealism: those that are grounded in self-conceptions, that is, in convictions about the role that the self or the human being plays in the world, and those based on what might correspondingly be called world-convictions, that is, on conceptions about the way the world is constituted objectively or at least appears to be constituted to a human subject. Concerning motives based on self-conceptions of human beings, idealism has seemed hard to avoid to many who have taken freedom in one of its many guises (freedom of choice, freedom of the will, freedom as autonomy) to be an integral part of any adequate conception of the self, because the belief in the reality of freedom often goes together with a commitment to some version of mental causation, and it is tempting to think that the best or at least the most economical way to account for mental causation consists in "mentalizing" or idealizing all of reality, or at least to maintain that the kind of causal determinism that seems to conflict with freedom is only one of our ways of representing the world. This is a form of ontological argument for idealism. Motives for idealism based on world-convictions can be found in many different attitudes toward objectivity. If one believes in science as the best and only way to get an objective, subject-independent conception of reality, one might still turn to idealism, because of the conditions supposed to be necessary in order to make sense of knowledge of a law of nature or of the normativity of logical inferences with laws of nature; this would be an epistemological argument for idealism. Then again, if one believes in the non-conventional reality of normative facts one might also be drawn to idealism in order to account for their non-physical reality—Plato's idealism in the theory of Forms, which asserts the reality of non-physical Ideas to explain the status of norms and then reduces all other reality to mere simulacra of the former, a forerunner of all later idealism, might be considered to offer an ontological motivation for idealism in its explanation of the reality of norms. An inclination toward idealism might even arise from considerations pertaining to the ontological status of aesthetic values—is beauty an objective attribute of objects?—or from the inability or the unwillingness to think of the

constitution of social and cultural phenomena like society or religion in terms of physical theory. In short: There are about as many motives and reasons for endorsing idealism as there are different aspects of reality to be known or explained.

All this being said, a major obstacle to an adequate understanding of philosophical theories leaning toward an explicit or implicit endorsement of idealism is the obscurity of the very term "mental" and associated terms such as "spiritual," "mind," and "spirit" that traditionally play such a central role in any characterization of idealism. In common usage the term "mental" does not imply any specific philosophical doctrine. The term ordinarily characterizes a cluster of properties and states of human beings and perhaps other "higher" organisms distinguished from other constellations of attributes attached to them falling under the general rubric of physical qualities. It is normally said of people that that they have not just physical qualities and abilities such as shape, resistance, bodily mutability, mobility, and so on, but that they also have mental properties such as the capacity to think, to speak, to dream, to desire, to request, and so on (for a typical list of mental qualities, see Descartes 1641: Meditation II; for an argument that human beings must be conceived as having both "P" and "M" predicates, that is, both physical and mental properties, see Strawson 1959). In the latter usage the term "mental" may cover everything that cannot be given a physical description or where it is at least doubtful whether it can be described in terms of physical properties. Someone who is thinking, dreaming, desiring, etc. is said to be engaged in mental activities while someone who is running, swimming, or eating and drinking is considered to be involved in physical activities. But from this ordinary adjectival usage of the terms "mental" and "physical" it seems to be a long way to a substantial philosophical theory. Common usage may assume that mental properties cannot be described in physical terms, but takes no position that they cannot *consist* in or be *explained* by physical properties, as for example Descartes did when he argued that mind and body are two distinct kinds of "substances" (Descartes 1641: Meditations II and VI). The philosophical implications of the terms "the mental" or "the mind" as well as the terms "the physical" or "matter" are not obvious from common usage, nor are the relations between them. Traditional suggestions about the character of those relations include relations of dependence or supervenience, which imply that one is ontologically more basic than the other, of expression or manifestation, which implies that one is epistemologically more basic than the other, and identity or sameness in either direction.

The shift from the everyday adjectival application to the philosophical and substantival use of the terms "mental" and "physical" seems to rely on the idea that in order to be engaged in activities such as thinking, dreaming, and desiring one has to presuppose not merely a subject for those predicates, something that occupies the grammatical position of a thinker or dreamer or desirer, but a subject that is a specifically mental entity or a mind. This is supposed to be something ontologically different from an item that is in the position to participate in activities such running, swimming, and eating and drinking, activities that presuppose physical entities or bodies. Because of the presumed difference in kind of the properties they have these entities are introduced as independent of each other and as each requiring different descriptions. In the modern period such a jump from the adjectival to the substantival use of the terms "mental" and "physical" can be traced to Descartes, who supposed that thought and extension (being extended, e.g., having shape and size) are essentially different modes of being, and that any kind of substance can have only one "essential" mode, thus that mind and body must be two essentially different kinds of substances. Descartes's distinction long maintained its grip on philosophy, even though it was immediately recognized that his own attempt to explain the obvious fact of interaction between mental and physical properties and events in the life of any human being through communication between mind and body at the point of the pineal gland deep within the brain was outlandish, and subsequent attempts, such as the "occasionalism" of Nicolas Malebranche (Malebranche 1674–5) or the "pre-established harmony" of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Christian Wolff, and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (Leibniz 1714; Wolff 1720; Baumgarten 1739), were not much better.

One way of attempting to sidestep the Cartesian dilemma altogether was by not starting from the substantival use of the terms "mental" and "physical." Instead, the "mental" and the "mind" but also the "physical" and "body" are conceived in non-substantival terms, rather as *activities* that ground what are ordinarily regarded as both physical and mental phenomena. This strategy led not only to a new approach to the physical in Kant himself, but to a new conception of idealism among the philosophers following Kant in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany. According to these post-Kantian idealists, whatever there is has to be conceived of as manifestations of mental activities. They understand the basic structure of reality as consisting of the realization of mental activities in dynamic processes, activities that somehow materialize both in mental and physical objects standing in different constellations. However, such a

strategy could be pursued in an analogous way with regard to the "physical" and the "body" as well: As the activities of thinking, dreaming, and desiring find their expressions or manifestations in the mental domain in the objectified shape of thoughts, dreams, and desires, so too physical forces and powers could be taken to manifest themselves in the physical domain in the shape of material objects and their interactions. While the "physicalist" might then conceive of mental events and states as supervenient on physical objects as so understood, the idealist sees mental activities as self-standing and self-explanatory. Although the model for thinking of the mental along the lines of activities first and substances only afterwards if at all is a hallmark of idealistic positions, in particular of the post-Kantian German idealistic doctrines of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the opposite model that conceives of the physical and bodies in terms of forces and dynamic processes has been pursued as well. The process ontology of Alfred North Whitehead (Whitehead 1929) is an example of this way of thinking. Physicalists too could and did move from a substantival-based conception of matter, such as Epicurean or early modern atomism, to a conception of the physical world in terms of activities; indeed, Kant's own alternative to atomism in physical theory, which reduces physical reality to attractive and repulsive forces, could be seen as the grandfather of non-substance-based physicalism. But remaining with the case of idealism, since such positions turn on the preference for using the category of activity rather than of substance for the primary characterization of reality, they can also be regarded as ontological arguments for idealism understood in the modified, activity-based sense.

Yet even if we accept the move from the adjectival to the substantival use of the term "mental" and agree that what is taken to be reality in its entirety contains more than just matter subject to the laws of physics, we might still have reservations that in addition to matter there must be mental entities. This is because the vagueness of the latter term is not removed whether it is understood in either its substantival or its activity-based sense. What does it mean to be a mental substance? What does it mean to be the manifestation of an activity or force? Many people will feel uncomfortable identifying with any version of idealism. They may reasonably be irritated by the fact that although idealists prioritize the mental they have little to say about its characteristics except that it is a non-material element of reality.

However, this is not a problem only for idealist theories; it is also a challenge to competing materialist and dualist positions as well once they

try to distinguish between different kinds of phenomena and attempt to capture the difference with the mental-physical distinction. Modern materialists who allow for mental or psychological phenomena in contrast to physical ones and try to explain the former by the latter, either by stipulating identity (the Australians like J. J. C. Smart and David Armstrong among others; see Smart 1963 and Armstrong 1968) or by relying on some sort of supervenience (e.g., Davidson, Jaegwon Kim, and David Chalmers; see Davidson 2001; Kim 1993; Chalmers 1996), also face the difficulty of finding a satisfying description of what they take to be non-physical or mental states. The same is true of dualists in all periods in the history of philosophy. Although the proponents of dualism might avoid implausibilities connected with reductionist or supervenience views, they do not fare much better when it comes to providing an uncontroversial characterization of what they are referring to when talking about the mental.

So it is no wonder that what exactly is meant by "mental" depends a great deal on the general explanatory approach of a metaphysical theory, that is, whether it establishes its results within a framework that gives priority to substances over activities or within a setting that favors activities over substances. These two main tendencies in metaphysical discourse about reality are independent of all the -isms mentioned so far (idealism, materialism, dualism). The first wants to convince us that everything that can be addressed has to be addressed in terms of things that have some sort of stable existence, thus that in the end whenever we deal with anything that exists we are dealing with substantial entities or things. These substances have to possess qualities or attributes, among them mental properties like thinking, perceiving, imagining, and willing and physical ones like extension, solidity, shape, and motion that are reducible or not to each other or to some third item. The other tendency starts with the conviction that what is ultimately real are activities or dynamic processes, paradigmatically in idealist circles the operation of thinking in any of its exemplary forms like perceiving, imagining, and willing, understood as activities or dynamic processes. Thinking as activity somehow expresses itself in what for us appears in the shape of substantial things with qualities. A preference for an ontology based on activities or substances does not immediately lead to a preference for idealism or materialism, but rather determines the conceptual framework within which the debate between materialism and idealism will be conceived and conducted.

Thus someone who endorses the substance-attribute structure as the ultimate ontological framework of any philosophical theory can realize

this endorsement in any of the alternatives mentioned here. Those who prefer a materialist characterization of the objects of experience will ultimately frame their conception of reality in terms of substantial entities like matter or its particles, while those who come to a substance-attribute agenda with idealistic ambitions come up with mind, spirit, or God conceived of as substantial entities or things as the ultimate constituents of reality. Materialists who are attracted to an ontology of activities or processes will characterize reality in terms of physical activities or processes and only then ascribe them to substantial entities conceived of as moments in these activities or processes, perhaps even as stalled or frozen moments in them, as in Kant's construction of matter from attractive and repulsive forces (Kant 1786) or Whitehead's process philosophy (Whitehead 1929). Idealists attracted to a dynamic framework of activities as fundamental will conceive of mental activities as autonomous events that might give rise to substances or result in thing-like appearances but will not take substances of any kind as the starting point for their theories.

In what follows we are interested in the distinction between substance-invoking and activity-based ontologies only as a difference between substance- and activity-based strategies for idealism. Within the period we consider, from the early seventeenth century to the late twentieth century, traditional pre-Kantian philosophies (continental rationalism and British empiricism) insofar as they exhibit idealist tendencies as well as later forms of idealism such as the British and American idealisms of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries are dominated by a substance-oriented ontology, while the classical post-Kantian German philosophers such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel favor the ontology of activity. Kant's own complex position equivocates not only between idealism and some form of realism but also between substance- and activity-based ontologies.

We conclude this Introduction with a little history. Although Plato's term *eidos*—"Idea" or "Form"—might have been its eponym, the term "idealism" became the name for a whole family of philosophical positions only in the course of the eighteenth century. Even then, those whom critics called "idealists" did not identify themselves as such until the time of Kant, and no sooner did the label come into use than those to whom it was applied or who used it themselves attempted to escape it or refine it. As already mentioned, Berkeley, the paradigmatic idealist in the British tradition, did not use the name for his own position, which he called rather immaterialism. Leibniz did use the term as early as 1702 to contrast Epicurus with Plato, calling the latter an idealist and the former a materialist because according to

him idealists like Plato hold that "everything occurs in the soul as if there were no body" whereas on the materialism of Epicurus "everything occurs in the body as if there were no soul" (Leibniz 1702: 578). In this text Leibniz does not call his own position idealism but says that it combines both of these positions; here he was apparently in the mood in which he considered physical objects to be real objects correlated with mind-like monads, instead of the mood familiar from such works as his late essays "On the Principles of Nature and Grace" and "The Monadology," familiar to later eighteenth-century philosophers, in which he unequivocally regarded physical bodies as the mere appearance of harmoniously related monads to each other.

It seems to have been Christian Wolff who first used "idealism" explicitly as a classificatory term. Wolff, often considered the most dedicated Leibnizian of his time (although in fact his position was more eclectic than at least some versions of Leibniz's) set out to integrate the terms "idealism" and "materialism" into his taxonomy of philosophical attitudes of those "who strive towards the knowledge and philosophy of things" in the "Preface to the other [second] Edition" of his so-called *German Metaphysics* (Wolff 1720, second edition 1747). Wolff distinguishes between two basic attitudes, one of which he sees exemplified by the skeptic, the other by what he calls "the dogmatist." The skeptic doubts the possibility of knowledge in general and thus refuses to defend any positive claim at all. By contrast, the dogmatist puts forward positive doctrines, and these can be divided into those which posit as fundamental either one single kind of entities [*Art der Dinge*] or two different kinds. Wolff names the supporters of the first position "monists" and the adherents of the second "dualists." This amounts to the division of all dogmatic doctrines, that is, all knowledge-claims with respect to the ultimate constitution of reality, into monistic and dualistic theories. Here is where the term "idealist" then makes its appearance in Wolff's typology: he distinguishes within the monists between idealists and materialists. Idealists "concede only spirits or else those things that do not consist of matter," whereas materialists "do not accept anything in philosophy other than the corporeal and take spirits and souls to be a corporeal force." Dualists, on the contrary, are happy "to accept both bodies and spirits as real and mutually independent things." Wolff then goes on to distinguish within idealism between "egoism" and "pluralism," depending on whether an idealist thinks just of himself as a real entity or whether he will allow for more than one (spiritual) entity; the first of these positions would also come to be called solipsism, so that solipsism would be a variety of idealism but not all idealism would be solipsism.

Wolff's way of classifying a philosophical system was enormously influential in eighteenth-century Continental philosophy—for example, it was closely followed by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in his 1739 *Metaphysica*, which was in turn used by Kant as the textbook for his metaphysics (and anthropology) lectures throughout his career, and whose definition of dogmatic idealism, as contrasted to his own "transcendental" or "critical" idealism, would also be that it is the position according to which there are only minds—and so it is no surprise that almost all talk about idealism was heavily influenced by Wolff's characterization. This is so because it well reflects the main metaphysical disputes in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century philosophy on the Continent. In terms of Wolff's distinctions, these disputes can be framed as disputes between (a) monists and dualists and then, among monists, (b) idealists and materialists; positions in this debate were often influenced by perplexities surrounding the ontological question of the possibility of interaction of substances, although they were also influenced by the (epistemological) debate over innatism. Although neither dualism, whose main representative was Descartes (who asserted the existence of both *res cogitans* and *res extensa*), nor monism, allegedly though debatably represented by Spinoza in its materialistic version (*substantia, deus, natura*) and by Leibniz in its idealistic form (monad, entelechy, simple substance) succeeded in finding satisfying answers to this and related questions, in the early modern era these disputes shaped the conception of what the object of metaphysics (*metaphysica generalis sive ontologia*) was supposed to be.

2
Idealism in Early Modern Rationalism

Prior to Wolff, neither defending nor refuting idealism seems to have been a central issue for rationalist philosophers, and none of them called themselves idealists. Yet what are by later lights idealistic tendencies—concepts and premises for arguments that would later be taken to lead to idealism—can nevertheless be found among them.

While Descartes's "first philosophy" clearly defends dualism, he takes his target to be skepticism rather than idealism, and thus from our point of view he is concerned to resist the adoption of epistemological grounds for idealism. Spinoza is often although controversially thought to defend a form of materialism, but takes his primary target to be pluralism as contrasted to monism. Leibniz does not seem overly worried about choosing between idealist and dualist forms of his "monadology" (Adams 1994 regards Leibniz as having consistently moved toward idealism over the course of his career, while Garber 2009 presents him as remaining more equivocal on the topic), but his view that the states of monads can be only perceptions and appetitions (desires) suggests a metaphysical argument for idealism, while his famous thesis that each monad represents the entire universe from its own point of view might be taken to be an epistemological ground for idealism, even if he does not say as much. Nicolas Malebranche's theory of "seeing all things in God" might be the closest we find to an explicit assertion in seventeenth-century philosophy of an argument for idealism on both epistemological and ontological grounds, and thus be taken as a forerunner of the "absolute" idealism of the nineteenth century. While from a later point of view it may seem surprising that these rationalists were not more concerned with explicitly asserting or refuting one or both approaches to idealism, they were more focused on theological puzzles about the nature and essence of God, metaphysical questions as to how to reconcile the conception of God with views about the independence or freedom of finite beings such as ourselves, and epistemological problems as to the possibility of knowledge and certainty. Once Descartes had distinguished mental and physical substances, his successors certainly worried about how two such different kinds of things can interact, and Leibniz adopted the idea

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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of a pre-established harmony among the perceptions and "appetitions" (desires) of different monads as his solution to this problem; but having associated the concept of idealism with Plato's doctrine of the existence of ideas separate from ordinary particulars, he did not seem to conceive of his own solution to the problems of the nature of and interactions between finite substances as itself a form of idealism.

However, if one situates their positions within the framework provided by Wolff it is not that difficult to find traces of idealism derived from both ontological and epistemological grounds in them. With respect to their metaphysical or ontological teachings, this claim may seem surprising. While according to Wolff idealists are representatives of a species of metaphysical monism, Descartes is one of the most outspoken metaphysical dualists in the history of philosophy. Hence to impute idealistic tendencies to Descartes's metaphysics seems like an elementary error. And in the case of Spinoza one could argue that although he definitely is a (very radical) monist and thus could count as an idealist within Wolff's taxonomy, he is instead traditionally considered to be a materialist in Wolff's sense. Consequently, it appears as if there is no basis for burdening either Descartes or Spinoza with idealism as defined by Wolff. Leibniz, meanwhile, often seems unwilling to commit himself to idealism even though that is the most natural interpretation of his monadology, while only Malebranche, as noted, seems to come close to explicitly asserting epistemological and perhaps ontological arguments for idealism as well.

Nevertheless, both Descartes and Spinoza provide a starting point for their metaphysical doctrines with their conceptions of God, a starting point that is already infected with idealistic elements if idealism is understood as implying a commitment to the primacy or at least the unavoidability and irreducibility of mental items in the constitution and order of things in general. Both agree that in order to gain insight into the constitution of the world one has to find out what God wants us, or maybe better: allows us to know about it (see, e.g., Descartes 1641: Meditation IV, paras. 7–8 and especially 13; Spinoza, *Ethics* I, XVI). They also agree that the world is created by God although they have different views as to what this means. Whereas Descartes thinks of God as existing outside the world of the existing things He created (see Meditation III, paras. 13 and 22) Spinoza holds that whatever exists is just a peculiar way in which God is present (see *Ethics* I, XXV, Corollary). Of all existing things all that God permits us to know clearly and distinctly is (again according to both Descartes and Spinoza) that their nature consists either in thinking or in extension. This

claim can be seen as providing in the case of Descartes the basis for his justification of ontological dualism. His distinction between extended and thinking substances is not just meant to give rise to a complete classification of all existing things in virtue of their main attributes but also to highlight the irreducibility of mental (thinking) substances to physical or corporeal (extended) substances because of differences between their intrinsic natures (see, e.g., Meditation VI, para. 19, and *Principles of Philosophy* I, §§51–4). The opposite, that is the non-reducibility of physical to mental substance, would also be true, but of less importance to subsequent idealists. In the case of Spinoza, thinking and extension refer not only to attributes of individual things but primarily to attributes of God (see *Ethics* II, Propositions I, II, and VII, Scholium), making them the fundamental ways in which God himself expresses his nature in each individual thing. This move gives rise to his ontological monism because he can claim that all individual things are just expressions of God's presence in modes of these two fundamental attributes.

Although the idea that God is the creator of the world of individual existing things (Descartes) or that God himself is manifested in every individual existing thing (Spinoza) might already be considered to be sufficient as a motivating force for subsequent disputes as to the true nature of reality and thus if God himself is conceived in mentalistic terms might have given rise to what were then called "idealistic" positions in ontology, other peculiarities within Descartes's and Spinoza's position might well have led to the same result, that is, to the adoption of idealism on ontological grounds. Denial of the corporeality of God might especially have been such a motive. Whereas Descartes vigorously denies the corporeality of God (*Principles of Philosophy* I, §23) and hence could be seen as starting an argument for idealism insofar as God is seen as the only truly independent substance (see Hatfield 2018), Spinoza vehemently insists on God's corporeality (*Ethics* I, Proposition XV, Scholium) and thus could be taken to be in favor of materialism. Sir Isaac Newton is another seventeenth-century thinker who conceives of God as present throughout the universe, and thus is taken to insist on the corporeality of God. But if God were already conceived of as essentially mind-like, then the theory of divine omnipresence could just as easily be the beginning of an argument for idealism.

Things are different when it comes to epistemological grounds for idealism. Descartes's and Spinoza's views of knowledge seem to be based on versions of the traditional conception of truth as *adequatio rei et intellectus*. They hold that knowledge should accommodate itself to reality, and thus hardly seem to be paradigms for conceptions according to which

knowledge is rooted in a cognizing subject actively contributing to the constitution of the object of knowledge—the conception of knowledge that Kant would subsequently present as the "Copernican" alternative to that traditional view (*CPuR* B xvi–xvii). Both Descartes and Spinoza think of knowledge as the result of a process in which we become aware of what really is the case independently of us with respect to both the nature of objects and their conceptual and material relations. Descartes and Spinoza take cognition to be a process of grasping clear and distinct ideas of what is the true character of existing things rather than a process of contributing to the formation of their nature. According to Descartes the sources of our knowledge of things are our abilities to have intuitions of the simple nature of things and to draw conclusions from these intuitions via deduction (*Rules for the Direction of the Mind* Rule III, para. 4ff.). For him the cognitive procedure is a process of discovery by finding clear and distinct ideas (see *Discourse on the Method*, Part 6, para. 6) of what already is out there as the real nature of things created by God (*Discourse*, Part 4, paras. 3 and 7). In a similar vein, Spinoza thinks of knowledge as an activity that in its highest form as intuitive (or third genus of) cognition leads to an adequate insight into the essence of things (*Ethics* II, Proposition XL, Scholium II, and *Ethics* V, Propositions XXV–XXVIII), an insight that gives rise to general concepts (*notiones communes*) on which *ratiocinationes*, that is, the processes of inference and deduction, are based (*Ethics* II, Proposition XL, Scholium I) the results of which provide the second genus of cognition (*ratio*). Thus the problem for both Descartes and Spinoza is not so much that of the epistemologically motivated idealist, that is, to uncover what we contribute through our cognitive faculties to our conception of an object, rather their problem is to determine how it comes that we very often have a distorted view of what there is and are accordingly led to misguided beliefs and errors. Given what they take to be a basic fact that God has endowed us with the capacity to know the truth (albeit within certain limits), that is, to know to a certain degree how or what things really are, this interest in the possibility of error makes perfectly good sense (Meditation IV, paras. 3–17; *Principles of Philosophy* I, 70–2; *Ethics* II, Proposition 49, Scholium). So neither Descartes nor Spinoza seem to be groping toward an epistemological argument for idealism.

At first glance, neither does Leibniz. In his project for a "universal characteristic," Leibniz can be regarded as having taken great interest in a *method* for inquiry, but he does not seem to have taken much interest in the epistemological issue of skepticism or the possibility of knowledge, and thus

did not explicitly characterize his famous "monadology" as an epistemological basis for idealism. But Leibniz's ontology can be seen as pointing toward idealism. He took great interest in the ontology of substances, following Descartes in conceiving of God as the infinite substance and everything else as finite substances—in contrast to Spinoza, whom he visited before the latter's death, he firmly rejected a single-substance monism, that is, one in which finite substances are mere manifestations of God's nature rather than independent creations by God. And from there the logic of his monadology clearly points toward idealism even if Leibniz did not acknowledge it. One explicitly ontological argument for the monadology that Leibniz frequently deploys is that in order to avoid an infinite regress everything composite must ultimately consist of simples, but that since space and time are infinitely divisible extended matter cannot be simple while thoughts, even with complex content, do not literally have parts, nor do the minds that have them, so minds, or monads, are the only candidates for the ultimate constituents of reality. Thus the late text entitled "The Monadology" begins with the assertions that

> The *monad* which we are here to discuss is nothing but a simple substance which enters into compounds,

that

> There must be simple substances, since there are compounds, [and] the compounded is but a collection or an *aggregate* of simples,

but that

> where there are no parts, it is impossible to have either extension, or figure, or divisibility and conversely where there is simplicity there cannot be extension or figure or divisibility. ("Monadology," §§1–3)

Yet monads must have some qualities in order to exist (§8) and to differ from one another, as they must insofar as they are numerically distinct (§9), and if the fundamental properties of matter are excluded, this leaves only the fundamental properties of mind, which Leibniz holds to be perception, "The passing state which enfolds and represents a multitude in unity" (§14) and appetition, "the internal principle which brings about change or the passage from one perception to another" (§15; all from *PPL* 643–4). This argument

clearly seems to imply that all finite substances are ultimately mental in nature (and the infinite substance, God, is obviously mental in nature); thus it seems to be a paradigmatic ontological argument for idealism, from which an epistemological complement would automatically follow, since if there is knowledge of reality at all, which Leibniz hardly seems to doubt, and reality is ultimately mental, then knowledge too must be of the mental. Leibniz would not be arguing from the premise that knowledge must be identical with the known, thus that reality must be mental because knowledge is, but would rather be concluding with this identity: since reality itself is mental, it is after all identical (in kind) with knowledge.

Yet Leibniz sometimes seems to be trying to avert such a conclusion by appeal to his idea of "pre-established harmony," and this is possible because he himself interprets this idea in two different ways. Early in his career, in such texts as "Primary Truths" (1680–4) and the "Discourse on Metaphysics" (1686) (both texts unpublished in Leibniz's lifetime and not known to his immediate successors such as Wolff and Baumgarten), Leibniz introduces the doctrine of pre-established harmony on truth-theoretical grounds. His argument is that everything that is true of a substance is so because the predicate of a true proposition is contained in the complete concept of its subject and because that complete concept reflects the properties or "traces" in the substance that is that subject; that there are true propositions linking every substance in the world to every other, thus the complete concept of each substance must be a complete concept of the universe itself and each substance must bear within itself as properties traces of every other in the universe; and thus that each substance must reflect, or, as mental, represent the entire universe. Yet since (finite) substances are also defined as existing independently of one another (although not existing independently from the infinite substance, God), there is a question as to why each should truthfully represent all the others, which Leibniz answers by appeal to the idea of a pre-established harmony: although considered from the point of view of the concept of substance it does not seem necessary that every substance truly represent all the others, in his goodness, thus in his preference for a maximally harmonious world, God has nevertheless made it such that they do.

In this mood, Leibniz tends to explain the existence of body as an artifact of the fact that each monad represents the world from its own point of view: physical locations and the bodies that occupy them are just the way in which the difference in the points of view of the monads is represented by them, but have no deeper reality; or, as Leibniz often says, space, spatiality, and

bodies are just *phenomena bene fundata*, that is, "well-founded modes of our consideration" (*PPL* 270).

Perhaps Leibniz obscured the completely idealist implications of his monadology from himself and some followers as well by the ambiguity of his conception of the pre-established harmony among all substances, an assumption that itself does not turn on any epistemological premise but on a theological premise, that of God's benevolence, which might be considered metaphysical in character. In many places, Leibniz considers the appearance of spatial relation to be nothing but the way in which the pre-established harmony between monads that properly speaking have only mental properties appears to those monads, and thus considers space and everything insofar as it seems spatial to be *phaenomena bene fundata*, an obvious source for Kant's later conception of the spatio-temporal realm as merely phenomenal. Sometimes, however, Leibniz wrote as if the mental and the physical, that is, the spatially extended, are two separate realms, each of which evolves according to its own internal principles, but with a pre-established harmony between *them* creating the appearance of interaction between them. Sometimes Leibniz interpreted his pre-established harmony in a monistically idealist way, sometimes in defense of metaphysical dualism. Perhaps Leibniz was genuinely undecided between two interpretations of the pre-established harmony and two conceptions of the reality of body, sometimes being a committed idealist and sometimes a dualist. As we will see later, even among the most committed absolute idealists of the nineteenth century it is not always clear whether they are actually denying the existence of matter or only subordinating it to mind in one way or another. But his basic conception of the monads, which did not seem to vary much between 1686 and 1714, entailed idealism, whether Leibniz liked this result or not. (So in the end we agree with Adams 1994.)

Leibniz's monadology can thus be seen as a forerunner of an ontological argument for idealism that brings an idealist epistemology in its train. His conception of space and time as *phenomena bene fundata* was clearly a forerunner of Kant's conception of the transcendental ideality of space and time, if not of the whole package of his transcendental idealism, which also affirms the existence of things in themselves of unknowable nature, which are therefore not all determinable as mental or having representations, except perhaps in our own case. But as we have just seen, Leibniz did not himself unequivocally affirm idealism, and as we will shortly see subsequent Leibnizians such as Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten argued for dualism and for a corresponding interpretation of pre-established harmony.

Nicolas Malebranche was also a dualist, committed to the existence of both mind and body, and an occasionalist, who held that since causation is necessary connection and the only truly necessary connection is between God's intentions and their effects, bodies cannot directly cause modifications of minds (or each other) but rather there can be a causal relation between body and mind only if God intends the mind to undergo a certain modification upon the occasion of a certain change in a body (hence the term "occasionalism"). This is a metaphysical argument. His further doctrine that the mind sees all things in God, however, can be seen as an epistemological argument, for it depends on his particular view of what modifications the mind undergoes in perception. He holds that *sensations* are literally modifications in the mind, but that they are highly indeterminate, or in later terminology lack determinate intentional objects, and that genuine understanding occurs only when and to the extent that the determinate *ideas* in the perfect intellect of God are disclosed to finite, human minds, to the extent that they are—the ideas in the mind of God can never be disclosed completely to mere humans, since we are merely finite and in particular because our perception of ideas in the mind of God is distorted by our bodies. Malebranche's position can be considered a theological form of Platonism: Plato held that the true Ideas or Forms of things have a kind of perfection that neither ordinary objects nor representations of them in human minds do, and therefore must exist someplace else; Malebranche takes the obvious further step of supposing that perfect ideas can exist only in the perfect intellect of God. He then supposes that human thought is intelligible to the extent that these ideas are disclosed to it, on the occasion of various sensations themselves occasioned by God but not literally through those sensations. The crucial point is that genuine understanding consists in the apprehension of ideas, even though these are literally in the mind of God rather than of individual human beings, rather than in the direct apprehension of physical objects, even though the latter for a Cartesian dualist like Malebranche do exist. Malebranche's position thus suggests an epistemological argument for idealism, that our own idea can apprehend only other ideas, even if imperfectly, although Malebranche remains a dualist. Malebranche had significant influence on both Berkeley and Hume, although neither the former and certainly not the latter accepted his position in its entirety. His position that knowledge consists in individual minds apprehending ideas in some greater mind would also be recreated by idealists as late as T. H. Green and Josiah Royce in the second half of the nineteenth century, as we will later see.

But we have much to cover before we come to those later versions of idealism, earlier or later. Before we turn to idealist tendencies even in earlier British thought, one last word about idealism within pre-Kantian rationalist philosophy is in order. As earlier mentioned, dualism rather than idealism became the default position of the German successors to Leibniz, the so-called "Leibniz-Wolffians" who dominated the teaching of philosophy in many German universities for fifty years from the third decade of the eighteenth century until the time of Kant and in some cases even beyond, and they correspondingly opted for the interpretation of the pre-established harmony as a relation between minds and bodies rather than among minds or monads alone. It may also be noted that defending dualism by means of an explicit "refutation of idealism" became the norm among these philosophers. This may be seen in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Metaphysica* of 1739, which would become Kant's textbook for his lecture courses in metaphysics and "anthropology" (a combination of empirical psychology, one of Baumgarten's topics in the *Metaphysica*, with material, for better or worse, on differences between sexes, cultures, and races) until the very end of the eighteenth century. Baumgarten accepts that the ultimate constituents of the world must be simples, hence monads of some kind. But he does not suppose that monads are necessarily minds or intellects, hence a dualism of monads is at least possible. Idealism would be the position that there are only intellectual monads; thus Baumgarten says that

> An intellectual substance, i.e., a substance endowed with intellect, is a spirit (an intelligence, a person) . . . Whoever admits only spirits in this world is an idealist. (*Metaphysics*, §402; Baumgarten [1739] 2013: 175–6)

Baumgarten follows Wolff in distinguishing between two possible forms of idealism, first egoism, which admits the existence of only one spirit, that of the person contemplating such a doctrine (what is now called solipsism), and then idealism proper, which allows the existence of multiple spirits. But both are refuted by the same argument. This argument builds on a Leibnizian principle not hitherto mentioned, the principle of plenitude, or the principle that the perfection of the most perfect world, which given his combination of benevolence with omniscience is the only one that God could have created, consists in the maximal variety of the universe compatible with its unity or coherence (e.g., "Monadology," §58, *PPL* 648), which was in turn the basis of one of Leibniz's arguments for the identity of indiscernibles. Baumgarten then argues simply that a universe that contains

not only more substances but also more *kinds* of substances rather than fewer is a more perfect universe, and necessarily exists in preference to the other; and a universe that contains not only multiple minds rather than a single mind but also bodies in addition to minds is therefore a more perfect universe than either of the former would be, and is therefore the kind of world that actually exists. In his words,

> the egotistical world, such as an egoist posits, is not the most perfect. And even if there is only one non-intellectual monad possible in itself that is compossible with spirits in the world, whose perfection either subtracts nothing from the perfection of the spirits, or does not subtract from the perfection of the spirits so much as it adds to the perfection of the whole, then the idealistic world, such as is posited by the idealist, is not the most perfect (*Metaphysics*, §438; Baumgarten [1739] 2013: 183)

and hence not the kind of world that exists. No one outside of the immediate sphere of Leibnizianism would ever again proffer such a refutation of idealism. But both Baumgarten's recognition of idealism and his refutation of it in a university textbook make it clear that by the middle of the eighteenth century idealism had become a standard topic for philosophical discussion, a position it would retain for another century and a half or more.

3
Idealism in Early Modern British Philosophy

The relation between ontological and epistemological arguments for idealism is complex. Idealism can be argued for on ontological grounds, and then bring an epistemological argument in its train. Or an epistemological argument can be offered independently of ontological assumptions but lead to idealism, especially in the hope of avoiding skepticism. The first option may have been characteristic of some rationalists, such as Leibniz in his more strictly idealist mood. Both forms of argument are found within early modern British philosophy. Hobbes and Locke certainly did not think of themselves as idealists, or would not have had the term been available to them: as far as ontology is concerned, Hobbes was a convinced materialist, and Locke seems to have been content with Cartesian dualism, although he was not as dogmatic about it as Descartes was, and in particular had no use for the idea that substances can have only one essential attribute, either only thought or only extension: it would exceed the boundaries of our knowledge to assert that God could not have "superadded" the capacity for thought to matter had he wanted to, and indeed for Locke the distinction between mind and body is a matter of "probability," not strictly speaking knowledge at all, which for him would have to be knowledge of necessary identity or difference (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, ch. III, §6). Nevertheless, both Hobbes and Locke make moves in what we would consider their theories of knowledge or epistemologies—another term they did not use—that could and would subsequently be enlisted in the cause of idealism proper, for example by Berkeley. The Irishman argues for idealism by extension from epistemological grounds that he finds in Locke, and then adds ontological considerations in order to avert skepticism, although he calls his position immaterialism rather than idealism. Berkeley's contemporary Arthur Collier, who explicitly denies the existence of mind-independent matter without giving his own position any name at all, argues first in an epistemological mood, then moves from epistemology to ontology. Hume's position in this history is complicated. Although he does not call

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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himself either an immaterialist or an idealist, he nevertheless accepts epistemological considerations that had led to idealism in the hands of Berkeley. At the same time, he purports to be providing a "science of man" that *explains* our ordinary beliefs about things by means of our own psychology without *revising* or *replacing* them by any traditional metaphysical positions at all; yet he also resists what he regards as a natural tendency to dualism and replaces it with a "bundle theory" of both the mind and objects that seems closer to idealism than to anything else. As complex as Hume's position is, we will see in the next chapter that Kant's famous relation to Hume is equally complex: while he will criticize Hume's explanation of our belief that every event has a cause, he will also take up Hume's critical attitude toward metaphysics; yet he will also assert on practical grounds, as necessary conditions of the possibility of morality, rational "belief" in some of the very same metaphysical theses that he agrees with Hume cannot, to put it in Kant's terms, be asserted on theoretical grounds.

Hobbes was a dogmatic materialist, yet also held a conception of knowledge as based on insight into necessary connections among terms—concepts—that could associate him with other rationalists. Locke would agree with Hobbes that genuine knowledge would consist entirely in insight into necessary connections revealed by what we might think of as transparent concepts of objects and their properties, but held that the lesser, merely probable knowledge that we humans have is based on observations of similarities and differences among what we might consider the more opaque ideas that we obtain from observation—the foundation of British empiricism in the wake of Francis Bacon. The British philosophers were all hostile toward dogmatic metaphysics of the kind epitomized in Germany by Wolff, although until the time of Hume, who had some familiarity with Leibniz, the metaphysics with which they were familiar were those of Descartes and Malebranche, Aristotelian scholasticism, and Neoplatonism, which had become domesticated in Britain through the work of the Cambridge Platonists in the second half of the seventeenth century (with whom Locke was nevertheless personally close, ending up in the last decade of his life living as a lodger in the household of Lady Damaris Masham, the daughter of Ralph Cudworth, one of the most prominent of the Cambridge Platonists). All of these movements fed into the general movement of rationalism, while the British philosophers, typically lumped together under the rubric of empiricism in spite of their own differences, all believed, albeit for different reasons, that the doctrines put forward by dogmatic metaphysicians rest on a totally unfounded conception of knowledge

and cannot survive rational scrutiny (empiricists might themselves be considered critical rationalists). Thus the primary task of philosophy for these philosophers became that of providing a theory of knowledge based on an adequate assessment of the constitution of human nature, for they were interested in knowledge only as a human achievement. However, it is not human nature in general that is of interest in this context but the workings of those human powers or faculties that are responsible for our human ability to make highly probable if not necessarily true claims to knowledge of the world. As Locke puts it at one point, the "simple ideas" that are the foundation of all our knowledge "*are not fictions* of our Fancies, but the natural and regular productions of Things without us, really operating upon us; and so carry with them all the conformity which is intended; or which our state requires":

> For they represent to us Things under those appearances which they are fitted to produce in us: whereby we are enabled to distinguish the sorts of particular Substances, to discern the states they are in, and so to take them for our Necessities, and apply them to our Uses. (*Essay* IV.IV, §4)

At the very least, how things *appear to us* is the basis of our knowledge of them and sufficient for our successful interaction with them—Locke might be seen as an ancestor of later pragmatism as much as idealism. And the faculties that shape how things appear to us were attributed by the British philosophers as well as by their Continental counterparts to what was called "spirit" or "mind" (*mens*, consciousness, *Bewußtsein*), an attribution that resulted in moving the "operations of the mind" into the center of philosophical attention. Reflections on the conditions of the possibility of knowledge certainly pushed Hobbes and Locke away from any form of naive realism in spite of their ontological commitments to materialism or dualism respectively, while Berkeley concluded that their epistemology would lead to a skepticism that could be avoided only by his own more radical "immaterialist" ontology. Hume's position remains complex and for this reason controversial. His thesis that our beliefs in causation, external objects, and even the self are all founded on "custom" and imagination rather than "reason" may be considered an epistemological position without ontological implications, thus not an argument for idealism; but while he sometimes seems to attempt to avoid commitment on ontological questions altogether, at other times, as in his argument that the existence of external objects in addition to our impressions is only a fiction, he comes close to inferring

idealism from his version of empiricism by leaving no room for our knowledge of anything other than ideas—or, by identifying the objects of knowledge as our own ideas, identifying knowledge with what is known. Berkeley overtly asserted the same with his famous slogan *esse est percipi*, "to be is to be perceived." That is an identity statement in form as well as substance. In spite of their differences, all of the leading British philosophers from Hobbes up to and including Hume insisted that the highest priority for philosophy is to give an analysis of the conditions and the origin of knowledge, and the way that they conceived of these conditions could imply idealism. Neither Hobbes nor Locke drew such a conclusion, to be sure. But Berkeley welcomed the metaphysical consequence of immaterialism that he drew from his analysis of the conditions of knowledge, and while Hume remained allergic to metaphysical speculations—as he famously said in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, any volume of "divinity or school metaphysics" that contains neither "abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number" nor "experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence" should be "commit[ed] then to the flames" (Section 12, Part 3)—and adopted the stance of a human psychologist *avant la lettre* rather than that of a metaphysician, his treatment of the "double existence" of external objects beyond the bundle of impressions and ideas that constitutes the mind as a philosophical fiction could certainly be interpreted as a case of idealism.

These idealist implications of some of the main convictions in epistemology among the British philosophers can easily be confirmed, starting with Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). As Hobbes points out in the chapters "Of Philosophy" and "Of Method" in the first part ("Computation or Logic") of the first section "De Corpore" (Concerning Body) of his *Elements of Philosophy* (1655), knowledge is the result of the manipulation of sensory input based on the employment of logical rules of reasoning (ratiocination) in acts of what he calls "computation." He describes the details of this process most succinctly in a short passage in chapter 6 of the first part ("Human Nature") of his *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* (1640), his first major philosophical work. After distinguishing what he calls "sense, or knowledge original" from "knowledge . . . which we call science," he goes on to "define" knowledge "to be evidence of truth, from some beginning or principle of sense" and formulates four principles that are constitutive of knowledge:

> The first principle of knowledge therefore is that we have such and such conceptions; the second, that we have thus and thus named the things

> whereof they are conceptions; the third is, that we have joined those names in such manner, as to make true propositions; the fourth and last is, that we have joined those propositions in such manner as they be concluding.
>
> (*Elements of Law* I.6.4)

The message is straightforward with respect to both the basis and the formation of knowledge: senses (sensations) are basic to our acquisition of knowledge in that they lead to conceptions (representations) to which we attach names (concepts) which we then put together into propositions which, if true, already constitute knowledge, and from which there arise further knowledge if we draw conclusions in an orderly way from them.

Although the account given by Hobbes of the origin and the formation of knowledge is rightly called empiricist because it traces all knowledge back to the senses or sensations and their non-sensory causes, that is, to what he calls "things without us," it is by no means directly committed to either idealism or dualism; on the contrary, Hobbes's preferred ontological position is materialism. Nevertheless, his account may lead to an early form of epistemologically motivated idealism. This is so because although Hobbes makes no claims as to either the constitution and the reality of what causes sensations or to any specific contribution on the part of the subject of knowledge to what we take to be the "accidents or qualities" of objects, he states, again most explicitly in the part on "Human Nature" in *The Elements of Law*, (1) that there are causes of our sensations which by way of their motions give rise to what we sense as qualities, but (2) that these qualities only have the status of "seemings and apparitions." In his own words: "The things that really are in the world without us, are those motions by which these seemings are caused" (*Elements of Law* I.2.10). While he is confident that there are external objects, and thus has no intention of affirming idealism, nevertheless because in Hobbes's opinion we could have conceptions of these seemings even if there were no objects around (*Elements of Law* I.1.8) there is for him no basis on which to found any metaphysical claims to the real existence of an external world or any epistemological basis for claiming knowledge of the real constitution of a subject-independent world or its real existence. Thus, Hobbes's epistemology allows him at most agnosticism about the existence of objects other than our representations of them, even if it does not force him into outright idealism. This is nicely confirmed by a passage from Part II ("The First Grounds of Philosophy") where he declares:

> Now things may be considered, that is, be brought into account, either as internal accidents of our mind, in which manner we consider them when the question is about some faculty of the mind; or as species of external things, *not as really existing, but appearing only to exist, or to have a being without us* [emphasis added]. And in this manner we are now to consider them. (*Elements of Law* II.7.1)

In spite of hospitality toward dualism, an explicit argument for an agnostic attitude with respect to the ultimate constitution of reality is also characteristic of John Locke (1632–1704). In "The Epistle to the Reader" that prefaces *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) Locke denounces rationalist metaphysics as a "Sanctuary of Vanity and Ignorance," and at the outset of the first chapter of the first book of the *Essay* he declares that:

> I shall not at present meddle with the physical consideration of the mind; or trouble myself to examine, wherein its essence consists, or by what motions of our spirits, or alterations of our bodies, we come to have any sensation by our organs, or any ideas in our understandings; and *whether those ideas do in their formation, any, or all of them, depend on matter or no* [emphasis added]: These are speculations, which, however curious and entertaining, I shall decline. (*Essay* I.I, §2; see also II.XXI, §73)

Instead, he restricts his investigation to the "purpose to enquire into the original, certainty, and extent of human knowledge" (*Essay* I.I, §2). Such an investigation presupposes an acquaintance with our own minds, and thus according to Locke the most pressing task is to understand the mind or the understanding itself. And because for Locke ideas are the sole material for processing by the mind, the most pressing task for understanding the possibility of knowledge is to give an account of "how he [the mind] comes by them [the ideas]" (*Essay* II.I, §1). There is no need to go into the details of Locke's conception of how the mind gets ideas and what the understanding does with them in order to arrive at knowledge. Although his description of these processes differs in some interesting ways from the model Hobbes proposes, in the end both Hobbes and Locke share the view (1) that whatever we can know depends on our having ideas which must be somehow based in sensation, (2) that there must be some external cause (Hobbes) or some source of affection (Locke) which gives rise to sensory ideas, yet (3) ultimately we are ignorant about the real constitution of these

causes and these sources. What we know is the content and structure of our own ideas, although we have no reason to deny the existence of external objects and we may even assume that in some regards external objects resemble our ideas of them, namely in the case of primary qualities such as shape, size, solidity, and number, at least in kind if not in detail. (That is, Locke assumes, the microscopic particles of which bodies are hypothesized to consist must have some shape, size, etc., but there is no reason to think that those qualities resemble the particular versions of them that we perceive in macroscopic objects.)

Point (3) is obviously important for the question whether Locke's conception of the operations of the mind is dualist or actually idealist. As in the case of Hobbes, Locke's position was intended to be neutral against and compatible with all these alternatives and he wanted to remain agnostic with respect to them. This is clear from his account of substance and from his remarks concerning the limits of knowledge. Substances, Locke famously holds,

> are such combinations of simple Ideas, as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves. (*Essay* II.XII, §6)

If one analyzes our concept of a substance one

> will find he has no other Idea of it at all, but only a Supposition of he knows not what support of such qualities, which are capable of producing simple Ideas in us. (*Essay* II.XXIII, §2)

Locke has a short argument for this supposition: while we cannot make sense of the idea of unsupported qualities or ideas subsisting by themselves and therefore must assume some support or "substratum" for them, the general idea of substance in the ideas of all particular kinds of substances, nevertheless since we know that "a certain number of these simple Ideas go constantly together" or "exist together" only from experience we have no source for and therefore cannot make any sense of the idea of an additional support or "substratum" for these ideas (*Essay* II.XXIII, §§2–3). Although Locke thinks of this argument as compelling, he sees quite well that it neither justifies nor excludes any claim as to what a substance or a thing really is, what its nature or constitution consists in. Thus he never tires of emphasizing that we have only a confused idea of substance (a claim also made by Leibniz about three-quarters of our knowledge, although he held that we

have a clear concept of what substance is), and repeats quite often (at least three times in *Essay* II.XXIII alone) that

> Whatever therefore be the secret, abstract nature of substance in general, all the ideas we have of particular distinct sorts of substances, are nothing but several combinations of simple ideas, co-existing in such, though unknown, cause of their union, as makes the whole subsist of itself.
>
> (*Essay* II.XXIII, §6)

He restricts this agnostic attitude not just to corporeal substances or bodies but extends it to spiritual substances or minds as well:

> It is plain then, that the idea of corporeal substance in matter is as remote from our conceptions and apprehensions, as that of spiritual substance or spirit; and therefore from our not having any notion of the substance of spirit, we can no more conclude its non-existence, than we can for the same reason deny the existence of body; it being as rational to affirm there is no body, because we have no clear and distinct idea of the substance of matter, as to say there is no spirit, because we have no clear and distinct idea of the substance of a spirit. (*Essay* II.XXIII, §5)

This criticism of any metaphysical claims concerning the ultimate constitution of reality is accompanied by a more general warning against overstepping of the natural limits of our cognitive faculties. According to Locke it is just a fact about human nature that there are limits to the powers of the understanding. In what might be regarded as an anticipation of later pragmatism, Locke holds that the cognitive powers that have been upon us by God are intended to be sufficient only for us to know "Whatever is necessary for the Conveniences of Life, and Information of Virtue" (*Essay* I.I, §5; see also II.XXIII, §12); unlike Descartes, he makes no presumption that his benevolence requires God to give us clear and distinct ideas of the essence of anything. Rather, we should accept that the nature and the constitution of substances both corporeal and spiritual are beyond our cognitive grasp and take this as a hint that God has set limits to what we can know because he sees no reason for us to know everything. Even if the powers He endowed us with would be magnified infinitely we still would remain clueless as to what substances really are because we still would be stuck in a world of qualities (this is one way of reading *Essay* II.XXIII, §12). Thus, in the end

metaphysical knowledge of any kind is beyond our reach. Yet this is nothing for us to be concerned about:

> For, though the comprehension of our understandings comes exceeding short of the vast extent of things; yet we shall have cause enough to magnify the bountiful author of our being, for that proportion and degree of knowledge he has bestowed on us, so far above all the rest of the inhabitants of this our mansion. (*Essay* I.I, §5)

For Locke, ontological agnosticism is an expression of piety. Locke's position may be regarded as a theological expression of the most fundamental epistemological motivation for idealism: no matter how much we know about objects and at what level of detail, we still know them only from our own, human point of view, but whether objects exist beyond our experience of them is really none of our business. But neither is Locke prepared to assert that only spirits or minds exist; that too would exceed the bounds of human knowledge.

Locke's attitude to metaphysics altogether is thus agnostic. (The classic argument that Locke's premises lead to a skepticism about the existence of anything other than ideas was offered by T. H. Green in his introductions to Hume's *Treatise* in 1874, reprinted in Green 1885–8: volume 1; Alexander 1985 makes the argument that Locke should be taken as a convinced advocate of corpuscularian science; Stuart 2013 argues that Locke was a committed dualist, although interestingly he argues that for Locke it is the existence of God rather than our own minds that proves that minds must be immaterial [250–64].) But Locke's agnosticism with respect to the ultimate constitution of substances and things or of the *fundamentum in re* of "the ideas thereof" characteristic of Hobbes and Locke is challenged forcefully by George Berkeley (1685–1753), for whom their agnosticism becomes a form of skepticism and even impiety. In his *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710) Berkeley raises doubts about whether the agnostic stance of Hobbes and Locke can be upheld consistently given the way they think about the origin and the properties of ideas. Although in his *Treatise* Berkeley does not mention Hobbes at all and addresses Locke not by his name but by formulas like "esteemed philosopher" and "learned author" (1710: Introduction, §11) only a few times, it is clear that he wants to confront Locke especially with a painful choice: either his conception of a substance or a thing has "no distinct meaning annexed to" it (1710: Part I, §17) and is nonsense, or he has to endorse not just epistemological

agnosticism but full-blown idealism or, in Berkeley's term, immaterialism. In other words, Berkeley's point is that Locke cannot afford to be agnostic with respect to the metaphysical status of substances and things if he wants us to think of ideas as the immediate objects of human knowledge. His English contemporary Arthur Collier (1680–1732) would make a similar argument.

Berkeley offers both epistemological and metaphysical arguments for his immaterialism. His epistemological arguments begin from the premise that ideas and only ideas are the objects of human knowledge, a presupposition that he at least considered uncontroversial. Although his taxonomy of the different kinds of ideas deviates in some ways from Locke's classification, he agrees with Locke that ideas exist only "in the mind" (1710: Part I, §2). He takes the mind to be a "perceiving, active being" which itself is not

> any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist or, which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived.
>
> (1710: Part I, §2)

From these stipulations he derives his most fundamental and famous claim (1) that "the existence of an idea consists in being perceived" (1710: Part I, §2) or that for ideas "their *esse* is *percipi*" (1710: Part I, §3) by the perceiving, active mind. This is the premise for Berkeley's conviction that the assumption that there even might exist unperceived objects or things is meaningless. Rather, he restricts existence to what is perceivable or, even more narrowly, to what is actually perceived: If the only objects that exist for a mind—whether it is my own mind or the mind of other human beings or the divine mind—are ideas because there is nothing else that can exist for the mind, then the very concept of something that exists but is not for the mind or is unperceived is a contradiction in terms. Thus if, as Berkeley supposes Locke does, one thinks of things as consisting of collections of ideas, he asks how could one take a thing to be something other than ideas and nevertheless to exist? This question underlies Berkeley's confidence in what is often referred to as his "master argument," the argument that one cannot conceive of anything existing unconceived because in trying to do so one is still conceiving of the object (1710: Part I, §23). This seems open to the obvious objection that he is confusing the content of a proposition (e.g., "The earth may still exist after the extinction of all conscious life") with the act of entertaining ("conceiving") such a proposition, which of course cannot take place except in a conscious being; but if he is already committed to the

thought that objects of knowledge are nothing but ideas, it is at least understandable that he should overlook this distinction. (Rickless 2013: 128 notes this dependence. Dicker 2011 calls the "master" argument Berkeley's "argument from the ego-centric predicament," 139–45. For other treatments of Berkeley's immaterialism see Tipton 1974; Pitcher 1977; and Winkler 1989.)

The second conviction on which Berkeley rests his case in favor of idealism is the more strictly metaphysical claim (2) that "an idea can be like nothing but an idea" (1710: Part I, §8; Dicker 2011: 149–69; Rickless 2013: 120–7). Although this claim is initially put forward in the context of his well-known criticism of Locke's primary-secondary-quality distinction, it is equally relevant for his denial that there are things "without the mind." The reasoning on which this claim is based is the following: For two items to stand in the relation of likeness they must have something in common. However, if an idea is mind-dependent and if ideas are all there is for the mind, then what is "without the mind" must be different in every respect from an idea. Thus a relation of likeness cannot obtain between ideas "in the mind" and things "without the mind." Berkeley puts this point quite bluntly by appealing to observation:

> If we look but ever so little into our thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a likeness except only between our ideas. Again, I ask whether those supposed originals or external things, of which our ideas are the pictures or representations, be themselves perceivable or no? if they are, *then they are ideas,* and we have gained our point; but if you say they are not, I appeal to any one whether it be sense, to assert a colour is like something which is invisible; hard or soft, like something which is intangible; and so of the rest. (1710: Part I, §8)

To be sure, the last step of this argument depends on the presupposition that external objects could not be colored, hard or soft, etc., in themselves, or that these sorts of properties are properties of ideas only. The likeness argument cannot stand without that assumption, so cannot count as an entirely self-standing argument for Berkeley's immaterialism.

There is a third metaphysical claim that is essential to both Berkeley's criticism of Locke and the idealistic position he is going to adopt for himself. This is the claim (3) that ideas are passive and causally inert, that is, they can neither produce nor alter another idea (1710: Part I, §25). This claim he also purports to base on observation:

> whoever shall attend to his ideas, whether of sense or reflection, will not perceive in them any power or activity; there is therefore no such thing contained in them. A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it, insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do any thing, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of any thing. (1710: Part I, §25)

Perhaps this is intended as an epistemological premise for an ontological claim. Be that as it may, again the primary function of this claim is to discredit a Lockean view according to which we have to think of the primary qualities of things—which are contents of the most fundamental ideas we have of them—as the causes of sensations or of sensory ideas. It is, however, also meant to support the untenability of the assumption that agnosticism with respect to the real existence of mind-independent things is a viable option for anyone who accepts Locke's model of how and by what means we acquire knowledge of objects.

Berkeley's criticism of Locke's theory of substance is not conducted for its own sake. On the contrary, it is meant to establish what Berkeley considers the unavoidable metaphysical consequence of a position that takes ideas "in the mind" to be the only material for the operations of the mind in its acquisition of knowledge, a position that he of course accepts. This metaphysical consequence consists in a thoroughgoing idealism or "immaterialism" with respect to the nature and constitution of things or substances. Berkeley's way of establishing this result is open to many questions. However, the basic outline of his overall argument can be sketched thus: If existence is restricted to ideas (and minds) and if, what is undoubtedly the case, things or substances exist, then things or substances must be ideas (or minds) too. Now, as Locke had shown, we certainly have ideas of particular kinds of things or substances, such as gold and lead, humans and sheep, which are distinguished by our ideas of their various properties, but we have only a confused and obscure idea of substance in general, which we suppose to underlie whatever collection of ideas we take to be a thing or a substance of one kind or another. The idea of substance in general must be included in our ideas of particular kinds of substances, but this idea is fundamentally problematic. Yet if we cannot have any ideas of things or substances other than our ideas of their properties, which clearly do exist in minds, then the only clear ideas of things that we have is as ideas. And then if things so understood do not always seem to exist in our own individual, human minds, which is also obvious, then such things must be ideas in some

other non-human, that is, divine mind. This divine mind cannot be itself an idea because it must be conceived as an active principle that can be the cause of ideas, a principle of which we can have no idea but only a "notion" (1710: Part I, §26, §27; Dicker 2011: 252–80). Therefore, the very fact that we take things or substances to be real commits us to the claim that things are ideal entities perceived by the mind of God. Idealism, one could say, is the only tenable basis for a realistic stance for Berkeley, but it leads to a realism about minds, human and divine, rather than of what he always calls material substance. And if one were to accept his interpretation of causality as a relation between ideas in terms of his theory of marks and signs, in particular his theory that what we think of as ideas of objects are signs of (God's plan for) future possible ideas for us, a view obviously influenced by Malebranche (cf. 1710: Part I, §65f.), then one would also have to agree to idealism. In Berkeley's view, the only alternative to idealism is not materialism but skepticism.

Berkeley's argumentation for his immaterialism was much more of a mix of epistemological and metaphysical considerations than Leibniz's purely metaphysical arguments. When Berkeley makes arguments in his *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) such as that heat might be thought to exist outside the mind, while pain is surely thought to exist only within the mind, yet "they are both immediately perceived at the same time, and the fire affects you with only one simple, or uncompounded idea," so that "the intense heat immediately perceived, is nothing distinct from a particular sort of pain" (Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, in Berkeley 1948–57: 2: 176), and is thus as mental as the pain is, this might be considered a metaphysical argument, namely that since heat and pain cannot be separated, they must be one and the same thing, and since pain is clearly mental, so must be heat (see Dicker 2011: 90–100). But it might also be considered an epistemological argument, namely that if we cannot know heat without knowing pain, then heat and pain must be the same thing, and since the latter is mental, or an idea, the former, and in due course other supposedly physical properties, must also be mental. Some of Berkeley's arguments in the somewhat more technical *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* might also be considered epistemological, such as the "master argument" on which he claims he is "content to put the whole upon," namely that you cannot conceive of anything existing unconceived because you cannot do this without conceiving yourself conceiving it, so in fact no conceiving or perceiving is ever anything more than "framing in your mind certain ideas" (Berkeley 1710: Part I, §§22–3, in Berkeley 1948–57: 2: 50),

that too turns on claims about what we can conceive or perceive. But when Berkeley claims that "the existence of an idea consists in being perceived" and "an idea can be like nothing but an idea" (Berkeley 1710: Part I, §3, §8, in Berkeley 1948–57: 2: 42, 44), those are metaphysical claims, made on the basis of assumptions about the very nature of ideas. It is not that we have no way of knowing whether an idea could exist without being perceived, or whether it could be like something that is not an idea; it is that these are not even possible, at least in Berkeley's view. His further claim that ideas are passive, causally inert, thus that they can neither produce nor alter other ideas (Berkeley 1710: Part I, §25, in Berkeley 1948–57: 2: 51), is also a metaphysical rather than epistemological claim, although it might also lead only to a parasitical argument: it could ground an argument that nothing outside our ideas could cause them only if it were already supposed that the only candidate for anything outside our ideas was more ideas, which by the metaphysical premise could then not cause our ideas. But idealism would already have been presupposed in such an argument.

This argument might also cause difficulties for Berkeley's theology. Faced with the question of why we think objects have continued existence when our ideas of them do not, Berkeley appeals to the divine mind, infinite in capacity, that has all ideas all the time. But if one idea does not cause another, God's ideas cannot cause our ideas, so the solution can only be that of Nicolas Malebranche: that we humans directly perceive, though only intermittently, the ideas in the mind of God. Of course, then we are perceiving something outside our own ideas, so this may be problematic for Berkeley. However, this does not have to be discussed here. The relevant point here is just to emphasize that he offers epistemological as well as metaphysical arguments for idealism.

Up until the point at which he introduces the mind of God into his argument, all of Berkeley's epistemological considerations might be thought of as expressions of the basic insight that we can only conceive of reality from our own point of view, which are then extended into full-blown idealism in order to avoid the whiff of agnosticism or skepticism and supplemented with the existence of a divine mind in order to satisfy our ineliminable tendency to believe in the existence of something more than just one's own mind or even of human minds in general. We will later see that the tendency to preserve both the impulse to idealism and the conviction that there is something more than ordinary human minds by positing a more than human mind is characteristic of many versions of idealism until the end of its glory days at the beginning of

the twentieth century. As we will see, this tendency is definitely absent from the philosophy of David Hume.

Before we turn to Hume, however, a look at Arthur Collier, a close contemporary of Berkeley who also defended idealism, will be in order. Arthur Collier was a much more obscure clergyman than Berkeley. He published his *Clavis Universalis: Or, A New Inquiry after Truth, Being a Demonstration of the Non-Existence, or Impossibility, of an External World* in 1713, the same year that Berkeley's *Three Dialogues* appeared and three years after Berkeley's *Treatise on the Principles of Human Knowledge*; however, he states that he had originally conceived his position a decade earlier, so before he could have read Berkeley. Although the work was not widely read, it was translated into German by Johann Christian Eschenbach in 1756, and then noticed by Thomas Reid and following him Dugald Stewart. It was republished in English in 1837 along with Collier's other philosophical work, *A Specimen of True Philosophy*, in a collection of *Metaphysical Tracts* edited by Samuel Parr, and then again in 1909, edited with an introduction by Ethel Bowman. By "external," mentioned in the title of his book, Collier meant "independent, absolute, or self-existent," and his position is that "all matter, body, extension, &c." (which he also frequently calls "expansion") depends "on mind, thought, or perception, and that it is not capable of an existence, which is not thus dependent" (Collier 1713 [1909: 6]). Collier's position is thus full-throated idealism, which he emphasizes is neither skepticism nor a denial that bodies exist, but the position that

> such and such bodies, which are supposed to exist, do not exist externally; or in universal terms, that there is no such thing as an external world.
>
> (1713 [1909: 9])

Collier argues for his idealism on both epistemological and more purely metaphysical grounds. His work, although a footnote in the history of philosophy, is interesting precisely because it so clearly illustrates the dual strategies for arguing for idealism.

Collier's most purely epistemological argument is that we are all familiar with (visual) experiences that are assumed to be of external objects but which do not differ from similar experiences that are clearly not of external objects, yet that there is no discernible difference between the latter and the former, thus that if the latter are in or entirely dependent upon the mind, then so must be the former. His argument might be thought to be a variant of Descartes's argument that there is no obvious difference between the

contents of dreams and veridical perceptions, at least when they are considered in isolation, although Collier uses examples such as those of imaginary beings, chimeras or centaurs (1713 [1909: 17]), which he supposes we (visually) represent just as vividly (his term, anticipating Hume) as other objects, secondary qualities (1713 [1909: 21–2]), cases of double vision, cases of experiences which change, such as different phases of the moon, when no one would believe that the external object is changing (1713 [1909: 33]), and mirror images, which everyone believes exist in the mind, not in the piece of glass outside us, and yet are indiscernible from other images of their objects. He also equates being visible with being "present to the mind," and asks how something could be present to the mind if it were elsewhere from the mind (1713 [1909: 35]). He infers that to be visible is to be in or dependent upon the mind, and thus that to be outside of the mind would necessarily be to be invisible (1713 [1909: 56]).

This begins the more purely metaphysical part of Collier's argument: that to be visible is to be in the mind we can consider an epistemological premise, but then he argues that nothing can be both visible and invisible at the same time, which is of course quite true independently of epistemology. A further argument he makes is that since God can give created minds any ideas directly, it would be needless for him to give us our ideas indirectly, by creating independent objects to cause ideas in us, and God does nothing useless (1713 [1909: 60–2]). This is a metaphysical, in this case theological, argument, directed against the occasionalists Nicholas Malebranche and his English follower John Norris rather than against Locke. The most interesting of Collier's metaphysical arguments for idealism, however, take the form of antinomies, and have sometimes been held to anticipate Kant's first and second antinomies (Bowman in Collier [1713] 1909: xxiv). Collier argues that there are sound arguments that an external world must be both finite and infinite in "expanse" or extension (1713 [1909: 63]), that it must be both finitely and infinitely divisible (1713 [1909: 68]), and that it must both be in motion as a whole and have moveable parts, but also cannot be either of these (1713 [1909: 78]). Since the concept of an external world is in these ways contradictory, such a thing cannot exist. It is striking, however, that Collier does not actually provide the arguments for what would become the theses and antitheses of Kant's first two antinomies, instead providing only a version of Zeno's paradox to prove the impossibility of moving parts within an extended universe, an antinomy that Kant does not take over.

It is not inconceivable that Kant knew of Collier's work through Eschenbach's translation, although there is no direct evidence for that. It is

more likely that Collier's argument that the difference between what we ordinarily take to be a veridical perception and a mere imagination or hallucination is merely a matter of vividness, and that the latter can become as vivid as the former and thereby undermine any use of vividness as a criterion of externality (1713 [1909: 19–20]), could have been known to Hume and influenced his formulation of the distinction between impressions and ideas in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40). So at this point we can turn to Hume.

Whether or not David Hume (1711–76) learned from Collier, he learned a great deal from Berkeley, above all his empiricist epistemology. He tried to avoid Berkeley's outright commitment to idealism, but there are parts of Hume's philosophy that it is difficult to read as other than idealist. Hume's view that our knowledge consists of our ideas, our recognition of "philosophical" relations among them, such as identity and difference, and our recognition of "natural" relations among them such as causation, which are established by imagination and custom, could constitute an epistemological ground for idealism—causality, in particular, which Hume regards as the basis of all our knowledge of existence, is reduced to a way of feeling and thinking, in other words a state of mind. But depending on how he is read, Hume either accepts the skepticism about possible external objects that Berkeley tries to avoid with his ontology that renders any external objects other than other human or divine minds impossible, or else holds that even if there are valid arguments for skepticism it is psychologically impossible for human beings to remain in a skeptical frame of mind, thus we naturally even if not rationally believe in the existence of objects apart from our ideas of them. (The "skeptical" reading of Hume which prevailed in the eighteenth century and was extensively stated in Green 1874, has in recent years been defended in Flew 1961, Fogelin 1985, and De Pierris 2015; the "naturalist" reading, that Hume is explaining our beliefs without attempting to undermine them, goes back to Kemp Smith 1941 and more recently Stroud 1977. Garrett 1997 presents Hume as using skeptical arguments to advance his naturalism, while Loeb 2002 sees Hume as starting from naturalism but lapsing into skepticism. Russell 2008 sees both skepticism and naturalism as moments in Hume's attack upon religion, or defense of "irreligion.") However, in those passages, prominently in Book I, Part IV of his early *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), where Hume entertains a kind of monism that sees both "minds" and "objects" as nothing but different sets or "bundles" of one sort of thing, namely, perceptions, impressions and their paler copies, ideas, his position might seem much like Berkeley's idealism,

with the difference that while he reduces all reality to mental states like impressions and ideas he does not see these as properties that must inhere in substantial minds any more than in substantial bodies. For Hume, both of these are fictions that we introduce in order to explain continuities among those impressions or ideas—although it may be difficult to explain who is introducing those fictions without resorting to substantial minds after all, in which case it is hard to see how Hume's position ultimately differs from Berkeley's except in his aversion to actually asserting a metaphysical thesis.

Hume's potentially idealist approach to causation is clearly on view in his 1748 *Enquiry Concerning Human Knowledge*, which was quickly translated into German and would eventually provide Kant with the stimulus for his own aprioristic rather than empiricist argument for idealism with regard not only to causation but to all of what he called the categories of pure reason, including especially substance and interaction as well as causation. But since Kant was not completely familiar with the contents of Hume's earlier *Treatise of Human Nature*, he did not know, or at least acknowledge, that Hume too had generalized his approach to causality to the cases of mind and body, nor did he know that Hume may have tried to sidestep Berkeley's commitment to substances but not his idealism altogether by his theory of both minds and bodies as bundles of perceptions. Kant would try to avert Berkeley's version of idealism by a different stratagem, but before we come to that we must consider Hume's position more fully. Hume accepted from Locke and Descartes before him that the immediate objects of consciousness are what they had called ideas, although he reserves that word for copies or subsequently recalled perceptions rather than the originally experienced perceptions that he calls impressions. He also adopts the view of his predecessors that knowledge lies in the recognition of relations among impressions, ideas, or both, and divides those relations into two kinds, philosophical and natural. Philosophical relations are those immediately evident on reflection on or comparison of particular ideas, and include resemblance, identity, spatial and temporal relations such as above and below or before and after, number and degree, and logical contrariety (Hume 1739–40: I.I.5), while natural relations are those that are not immediately evident on reflection on a single impression or idea or in a single comparison of any number, but which instead become evident, or more properly are formed, only through repeated experience. Hume's best-known argument is then that causation is not a philosophical but a natural relation: the causal relation comprises temporal succession, spatial contiguity, and

necessary connection, and while the first two are philosophical relations that are immediately apparent, the necessary connection between different ideas—those of a cause and its separate effect—is, unlike the necessary identity of two qualitatively similar ideas, not immediately apparent, as Hume puts it, to reason (1739–40: I.III.2), but instead grows only out of repeated experience: The repeated experience of qualitatively similar pairs of impressions causes them to become linked in the mind, as we would ordinarily say, or at least in consciousness, as the careful Hume should say at most (1739–40: I.III.6). In fact, Hume's argument is that repeated experience itself has two effects: it creates a habit of thought such that upon the presentation of an impression of one kind that has repeatedly been experienced in spatial and temporal conjunction with one of another kind, a vivid version of the idea of the kind of impression with which the first kind of impression has been repeatedly associated immediately occurs—this is the essence of causal inference or belief, because a belief is nothing but an idea that is almost as vivid and forceful as the impression of which it was once a copy (1739–40: I.III.7–8; this is the thought Hume could have learned from Arthur Collier)—and second, there is an actual feeling of the mind (as we would ordinarily say) being tugged from the one impression to the other idea—this is the basis of the idea of necessary connection, a connection which the mind then "spreads" upon its objects to form the idea of a necessary connection among them or their states (1739–40: I.III.14). (A systematic treatment of Hume on causation is Beebee 2006, while Stove 1973 focuses specifically on Hume's account of induction.)

Hume's account of our idea of and belief in causation might be considered to already take one step toward idealism by relocating the relation of causation from the external objects where we would ordinarily suppose it to obtain to the mind, which we would ordinarily suppose knows but does not constitute the relation known. In Hume's words,

> Tho' the several resembling instances, which give rise to the idea of power, have no influence on each other, and can never produce any new quality *in the object*, which can be a model of that idea [of power or causation], yet the *observation* of this resemblance produces a new impression *in the mind*, which is its real model. . . . Necessity, then, is the effect of this observation, and is nothing but an internal impression of the mind, or a determination to carry our thoughts from one object to another.
>
> (1739–40: I.III.14, para. 20)

Several things may be noted about this theory. For one, if it had been Hume's intent to raise a general skepticism about causation, based on the famous worry about induction that he himself raises, especially in the subsequent *Enquiry*, namely that an assertion of causality claims that future impressions will occur in the same patterns as past ones but there is no basis "in reason" for assuming that the future will resemble the past, then the relocation of causation from the domain of objects to the domain of the mind should make no difference, because we have no more reason to believe that the mind will behave the same way in the future as it has in the past than we do to believe that about anything else. So we must either believe that Hume is very confused, not realizing that his skepticism about induction as applied to external objects must undermine our confidence in his application of induction to the mind itself, or else that he is very arch, and that he means us to do his skeptical work for him by carrying over skepticism about induction to the case of the mind itself, or else that he is not really worrying about issues of justification and thus of the threat of skepticism at all, but just means to be giving a plausible *description* of the only possible basis for causal inference, namely the mind's experience of itself. The last possibility may well seem to be the most plausible, leading to the "naturalist" reading of Hume promoted by Norman Kemp Smith, Barry Stroud, and Don Garrett rather than the "skeptical" reading of Hume accepted by Hume's contemporaries such as James Beattie and Thomas Reid and defended recently and more skillfully by Robert Fogelin.

There is a further issue with Hume's treatment of causation that is largely suppressed in the *Enquiry* but that was evident in the *Treatise*, namely, that although, as we saw in the last passage quoted, Hume sometimes describes necessary connection as being displaced from the *object* to the *mind*, on his own strict interpretation of empiricism there is a problem in positing the existence of either objects or minds distinct from perceptions. This is what pushes Hume toward his own even if unacknowledged form of idealism. That is, although we naturally speak of perceptions as being *of* objects and *in* or *by* the mind, on the view that all knowledge is founded on perception and that in perception we are immediately acquainted with nothing but perceptions, it becomes problematic how we could have knowledge either of the mind itself or of any object of perceptions distinct from those perceptions. Hume puts the former point succinctly by arguing that we have no perception of the self distinct from our perception of its perceptual states:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or

> shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. (1739–40: I.IV.6.3)

He then argues that in fact the self is

> nothing but a bundle of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement (1739–40: I.IV.6.4)

and that the idea of a continuous self is but a fiction or illusion created by relations of resemblance and continuity among perceptions in the bundle, just as both the idea of and belief in causal connection were created by repetition of pairs of impressions. Without saying that the *objects* of perception are also nothing but bundles of related perceptions, Hume presents a similar account of how the idea of objects distinct from our perceptions of them is generated by our impression of continuity among perceptions: although only philosophers reflect on this, in fact we know that perceptions are fleeting and transitory; we mistake continuity among them for enduring identity; and we then invent something other than perceptions, something not fleeting and transitory, to which to ascribe that enduring identity (1739–40: I.IV.2). In neither case, however, do we nor can we actually have a clear idea of any object or substance distinct from our perceptions, because all our basic ideas must be copied from impressions and we do not have impressions of these things. Thus we do not have an idea of external objects or their substance, but neither do we have a clear idea of the mind or its substance. We may not reflect upon this fact in ordinary life (perhaps we cannot keep it in mind in ordinary life), but in philosophy we cannot avoid it.

Hume's attack on the supposition that we have an idea of the mind as distinct from its impressions thus constitutes a rejection of Berkeley's commitment to the existence of mental substances, but not of idealism altogether. On Hume's account, we are not entitled to assert the existence of both ideas and the minds, human or divine, that have them, but only the existence of the former. Hume does not admit that we are forced into skepticism about either minds or external objects by his approach, that is, into a position that there may really be minds and external objects but we cannot know that fact or their real qualities, nor does he confront Descartes's argument that skepticism about the existence of one's own mind is impossible; yet he still has a lingering worry that although there

are psychological mechanisms that lead us to form the fictions of minds and bodies beyond perceptions, we do not really know what we are talking about when we talk about such things, and thus cannot even coherently doubt whether we have knowledge of them—our talk about them is explicable but meaningless. Hume thus seems to end up with an uneasy compromise between idealism and agnosticism.

4
Kant

The first major philosopher actually to call himself an idealist was Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), although as soon as he did so he labored to distinguish his position from Berkeley's by calling his position empirical realism combined with transcendental idealism, and renaming his position "critical" rather than "material" or even "visionary" and "dreaming" idealism (*Prolegomena* §13, Note 3, 4: 293). By this Kant means that space and time are the ineliminable forms of our immediate experience or "intuitions" of things as they appear to us but are not real properties of things as they are in themselves; however, since Kant neither denies the existence of things independent from our representations of them nor asserts that these things must be mental in nature, the transcendental idealist part of his position cannot be straightforwardly identified with idealism as he understood it or as we are understanding it here, namely, as the position that reality is ultimately mental in nature. While Kant thinks that he has given a sound argument for the transcendental ideality of space and time, he thinks he has given no reason at all to question the existence of things independent from our representations of them. Moreover, since he separates the basic "categories" of our thought that are the forms of all our *concepts* of things from our immediate *intuitions* of them, and finds the source of the categories in our capacity for judgment rather than in our sensibility or capacity for intuitions, he does not have to face Hume's worry that our concepts of both our selves and our objects may be downright meaningless. Kant's position is that we can readily *conceive* of both our selves and external objects as distinct from the appearances of either, and further that we can use the Cartesian distinction between non-extended thinking things and non-thinking extended things *within* the domain of our experience, further that we have no reason to doubt the existence of either our selves or external objects, but that we cannot *know* the real nature of either our selves or external objects as they are "in themselves." There are two apparent breaches in this barrier, however. For one, Kant certainly holds that we cannot conceive of God as an extended, material being; but then again, he holds that we can have only rational "belief" (*Glaube*) in the existence of God,

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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based on moral grounds; indeed he holds ultimately that God is nothing but our idea of our own capacity for morality (see Guyer 2000); so in this case we still do not have genuine *knowledge* of the nature of something existing in itself. The other case is that of our own freedom, which according to Kant must be a "transcendental freedom" that is incompatible with the thoroughgoing causal determinism of the world as we experience it because it must be a freedom to choose to do the right thing no matter what our circumstances and prior history might seem to determine us to do, and which must therefore be a capacity of our "noumenal" selves or of our selves as they really are rather than of our "phenomenal" selves or selves as they appear to us. In this case Kant may be allowing genuine knowledge of our selves as they are in themselves, and attributing to them a capacity that is incompatible with the properties of bodies as we ordinarily experience them; but as he does not hold that *all* things in themselves have this capacity, neither is he insisting that all reality is essentially mental in nature. Thus his position remains distinct from the thoroughgoing idealism of Berkeley or indeed of Leibniz.

The sources as well as the form of Kant's position are complex. Kant was deeply impressed by what he knew of Leibniz (the qualification "what he knew of" is necessary because many of the texts that are crucial to later understandings of Leibniz, such as "Primary Truths" and the "Discourse on Metaphysics" (1686) were entirely unknown during Kant's lifetime, and others, such as the *New Essays on Human Understanding*, were published only when Kant was well into his career, in 1765, and may already have fixed his view of Leibniz), in particular by Leibniz's view that space and time are *phaenomena bene fundata,* "well-founded phenomena" but not representative of the real nature of things; indeed, Leibniz is the obvious source for Kant's use of the term "phenomena" to designate how things appear to us, although his use of the counterpart term "noumena" to designate how they might be in themselves seems to be his addition to Leibniz's terminology. Kant was also influenced by what he knew of Hume and his view that causation is a form of thinking that we impose upon our experience rather than something we directly experience. He was more generally impressed by the empiricist argument that our knowledge of objects depends upon experience of them: for Kant, our own minds never supply more than the general forms of intuitions and concepts, of sensibility and understanding, while the "matter" of experience and thus the content for all empirical concepts is always supplied by experience—a fact from which Kant draws the far-reaching consequence that the idea of a complete system of empirical

knowledge is never more than a regulative ideal for us (*CPuR*, Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic; *CPJ*, Introduction, sections IV–V). However, Kant thought that both the Leibnizian and the Humean approaches failed to account for the possibility of what he called synthetic a priori knowledge, that is, knowledge that goes beyond the mere analysis of concepts, that thus does more than merely unpack explicit or tacit definitions, and therefore must rest on something more than the mere principle of non-contradiction, but yet legitimately claims universal and necessary validity. The core of Kant's constructive model of knowledge is devoted to explaining how we can have synthetic a priori knowledge based on the pure forms of intuition, the pure categories of the understanding, and their combination into the general principles of empirical knowledge such as that every change that we can experience must be an alteration in the state of an enduring substance governed by causal laws. But, unlike Plato, the original apriorist *avant la lettre*, he does not see synthetic a priori knowledge as leading to realism about things having the features that we know a priori, nor, like Malebranche, the theological Platonist, does he see such knowledge as knowledge of the mind of God. Rather, Kant sees the possibility and actuality of synthetic a priori knowledge as providing the conclusive argument for the idealist aspect of his position through the premise that we can only know to be necessary and therefore universally valid the forms that we ourselves impose upon our experience. Thus precisely because we have a priori knowledge of space and time in his view they can be only features of our own representations of things, not properties or relations of those things as they are in themselves. At the same time, even though when he wrote his main works he was not well informed on the aporia about subjects and objects about which Hume had ultimately thrown up his arms in the *Treatise*, which has here been characterized as the tension in Hume between agnosticism and idealism, Kant recognized that we cannot talk about what he called appearances without conceding the real existence of subjects to which objects appear as well as the objects that appear to such subjects. Kant was thus led to the characteristic feature of his own "transcendental" idealism, namely his combination of idealism about the main *forms* of objects, that is, the view that we ourselves impose spatiality, temporality, substantiality, causality, and other forms upon our experience and precisely because we know these forms a priori cannot regard them as also the real forms of objects independent of ourselves, with a kind of ontological realism, his unshaken confidence that in some sense both what we refer to as our selves and our objects really do *exist* independently of our representations of them.

But although Kant insists that his own "transcendental idealism" includes "empirical realism," that is, recognition of the pervasive reality of space and time, thus of enduring external objects, *in our experience*, he does not want to call his own position "transcendental realism," because for him that would be the view that objects independent of our representations do exist *with* the forms that we represent them as having. That is, in Kant's terms, transcendental realism would be the view that things really are spatial and temporal independently of our representing them as such. Nor would he even be happy to call this conception of things in themselves a kind of idealism, because it is part of his position that, at least from what he calls a theoretical point of view, we cannot suppose that even our own *minds* are really as they appear to us, nor can we assert that the reality that ultimately underlies the appearance of minds is essentially different from the reality that ultimately underlies the appearance of bodies. Yet he remains confident that we are entitled to assert the existence of some sort of reality underlying the appearance of both minds and bodies. And to make matters even more complicated, he is confident, as already noted, that we *can* rationally believe God to be mental in nature from what he calls a "practical" point of view, that is, as a necessary presupposition of rationally attempting to do what morality commands, and even seems to think that our own freedom, incompatible with the nature of matter, is genuinely known, a "fact of reason" (*CPrR* 5:30). A complete characterization of Kant's position would thus be empirical *realism* about space, time, causation, and the other categories, transcendental *idealism* about space and time but combined with *realism* about the *existence* of things in themselves, and now even "practical" *idealism* about the nature of ourselves as things in themselves and the nature of God, as in both cases essentially mental or spiritual—a positive assertion of the special, non-material nature of God and self but not of *all* things in themselves.

Kant had already published a number of substantial scientific as well as philosophical works before the "great light" of transcendental idealism came to him in 1769, leading to his first statement of it the following year in his inaugural dissertation, *On the Forms and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible Worlds* (1770), defended on his accession to the chair of logic and metaphysics at the "Albertina," the university in Königsberg where he spent his life. But it would then take him another decade of unrelenting work, the so-called "silent decade," to publish his full argument for transcendental idealism in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which appeared in 1781. (On the development of the *Critique* during the "silent

decade," see Haering 1910; Carl 1987; and Guyer 1987: Part I). Even then the relation between the empirical realism and transcendental idealism that he developed in that work continued to vex him: the first substantial review of the book in 1782, by the Breslau "private scholar" Christian Garve (1742–98) but heavily revised by the editor, the Göttingen empiricist J. G. H. Feder (1740–1821), charged him with Berkeleianism, in other words, with idealism as ordinarily understood to allow only mental entities and states (the "Göttingen" review as originally published as well as Garve's original version are both translated in Sassen 2000), and Kant then tried to rebut that accusation in his attempted popularization of the *Critique*, the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* of 1783, and to further defend that rebuttal of ordinary idealism in the "Refutation of Idealism" that he added to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1787. (On the development of Kant's position between 1781 and 1787, see Guyer 1987: Part II). But Kant was still not done with the topic of idealism, as we know from a dozen further drafts of the "Refutation" that he composed *after* that second edition of the *Critique* (Guyer 1987: Part IV). Indeed, Kant continued to struggle with the clarification of his own position to the end of his life, attempting a restatement of transcendental idealism in the uncompleted material for a final book that has come down to us under the name of the *Opus postumum* (see Förster 2000; Emundts 2004; and Guyer 2005: ch. 11). But since it was Kant's presentations of his position in the two editions of the *Critique* and the *Prolegomena* that were most influential in his own time and have been since, we shall concentrate on those texts here. It was in these texts that Kant attempted to perfect his combination of empirical realism about space, time, and the categories, transcendental idealism with regard to space and time, and yet realism about the actual existence of things distinct from our representations of them combined with agnosticism about their real nature although together with the outright denial of their spatiality and temporality and assertion of the fact of freedom in our own case. It was then primarily in his writings in moral philosophy, above all the *Critique of Practical Reason* of 1788, that he developed what we have called his practical idealism about the real freedom of the noumenal self and the idea and "postulate" of an immaterial God. The second half of Kant's third and final critique, namely, the Critique of Teleological Judgment in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, uses Kant's complex position to justify the revival of a teleological approach to nature that would seem to have already been outmoded in Kant's time, but was transformed into a regulative key (Guyer 2020b) and which had an enormous influence on the formation

of the philosophical projects of the post-Kantian German idealists although perhaps without Kant's careful qualification.

Kant's arguments for his transcendental idealism are distributed across all parts of his *Critique of Pure Reason*. He gives a direct argument for it in the Transcendental Aesthetic, supplemented by the Transcendental Analytic, and he gives an indirect argument for it in the Transcendental Dialectic by arguing that only his transcendental idealism can allow us to avoid the paradoxes or confusions of traditional metaphysics (Proops 2021: chs. 10 and 12). We will comment first on Kant's direct argument for transcendental idealism and then on his indirect argument for it through the critique of traditional metaphysics.

The direct argument is based on Kant's claim, developed in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and renewed in §§6–13 of the *Prolegomena*, that we necessarily represent space and time and objects in them by means of our a priori representations of space and time, which are thus pure forms for the intuition—immediate presentation—of particular objects, and that we can construct proofs of theorems about space and time in geometry and arithmetic by appeal to our a priori representations or in "pure intuition." But how does this lead to any form of idealism? Kant's chief argument is that space and time can represent

> no property at all of any things in themselves nor any relations of them to each other, i.e., no determination of them that attaches to objects themselves and that would remain even if one were to abstract from all subjective conditions of intuition,

and that space and time themselves can instead be *only* our a priori representations of them and the spatial and temporal features of objects in space and time *only* features of our representations of them or of the "appearances" of objects, because

> neither absolute nor relative determinations can be intuited prior to the existence of the things to which they pertain, thus be intuited *a priori*.
>
> (*CPuR* A 26/B 42)

The decisive point of this argument is the following: although because of our forms of intuition our particular representations *necessarily* have spatio-temporal structure, any objects that had that structure *independently* of our

so representing them would at best have such structure *contingently*, and thus the supposedly synthetic a priori propositions about space, time, and their mathematics would not be *necessarily true* throughout their domain after all. This argument thus exploits the key epistemological premise for idealism, namely that if there is an isomorphism between knowledge and the known it must be necessary. Kant is arguing that since we have no ground to assert a necessary isomorphism between the spatio-temporal structure of our experience and the spatio-temporal structure in things as they are in themselves, we must deny the latter altogether and instead identify the objects of our spatio-temporal knowledge only with our own representations and their forms. Kant makes this key move several times. In the *Critique*, he poses the rhetorical question,

> If there did not lie in you a faculty for intuiting *a priori*; if this subjective condition were not at the same time the universal *a priori* condition under which alone the object of . . . intuition is possible; if the object ([e.g.,] the triangle) were something in itself without relation to your subject: then how could you say that what necessarily lies in your subjective conditions for constructing a triangle must also necessarily pertain to the triangle in itself (A 48/B 65);

similarly, in the *Prolegomena* he writes that

> Pure mathematics, and especially pure geometry, can have objective reality only under the single condition that it refers merely to objects of the senses, with regard to which objects, however, the principle remains fixed, that our sensory representation is by no means a representation of things in themselves, but only of the way in which they appear to us,

for on the contrary supposition

> it absolutely would not follow from the representation of [e.g.] space, a representation that serves *a priori*, with all the various properties of space, as foundation for the geometer, that all of this, together with what is deduced from it, must be exactly so in nature. The space of the geometer would [or could] be taken for mere fabrication and credited with no objective validity, because it is simply not to be seen how things would have to agree necessarily with the image that we form of them by ourselves and in advance. (*Prolegomena* §13, Note I, 4: 287)

So, Kant concludes, in order to be necessarily true throughout their domain, the synthetic a priori propositions about space and time—and this includes not just the specific propositions of geometry or mathematics more generally but also the general propositions derived in the metaphysical expositions, such as that space and time are infinite singular wholes with parts rather than instances—must be true only of the representations on which we impose our own forms of intuition, and cannot be true of things as they are in themselves. This is Kant's chief argument for transcendental idealism, the view that the way things appear to us essentially reflects our cognitive capacities rather anything intrinsic to them, combined with what we could call theoretically indeterminate ontological realism, the view that there are things independent of our representations of them but because our most fundamental ways of representing things cannot be true of them we cannot know anything about them other than the fact of their existence itself—until, that is, Kant brings his practical argument for our own ultimately mental nature and the mental nature of God on board. (This interpretation is developed in Guyer 1987: Part V, and Guyer 2017. For a different argument to the same conclusion, that Kant actually denies the spatiality and temporality of things as they are in themselves, see Allais 2015. For a different approach, that Kant never denies the spatiality and temporality of things as they are in themselves but only omits spatiality and temporality from the *concepts* of things as they are in themselves, see Bird 1962; Prauss 1974; and Allison 1983/2004.)

In a passage added to the second edition of the *Critique*, Kant also points out that by arguing for the "transcendental ideality" of spatio-temporality—that it is a necessary feature of our representations of things but not a feature of things as they are in themselves at all—he does not mean to degrade space to a "mere illusion," as did "the good Berkeley" (B 71): his position is that it is a subjective but necessary feature of our way of representing things, similar to secondary qualities such as color or fragrance (B 70n.) in being subjective but unlike them in being necessary (see also A 29/B 45), and he thinks that by failing to see that the spatiality (in particular) of our representations is necessary, Berkeley has unnecessarily "demoted" it to a mere illusion. Kant's larger objection to the charge that his position is not different from Berkeley's is, however, that while denying the spatiality and temporality of things as they are in themselves, he has provided no reason to deny that there *are* things distinct from our representations of them and our own minds as representing them even if their nature is necessarily unknown once they have been stripped of spatiality and temporality. But since this

larger objection is most clearly expounded and defended in the *Prolegomena* and the "Refutation of Idealism" added to the second edition of the *Critique*, which is inserted into the Transcendental Analytic, discussion of it can be deferred for now.

Kant does not need to mount a separate argument for transcendental idealism in the Transcendental Analytic, for while that is aimed at showing that the use of certain concepts (the categories of pure understanding) and principles (the principles of pure understanding) are necessary conditions of any cognition of objects at all, indeed of self-consciousness (apperception) itself, but also yield cognition only when applied to intuitions, pure intuitions in the case of pure mathematical cognition and empirical intuitions in the case of everything else (thus Kant's famous statement "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind," A 51/B 75), since empirical intuitions have already been shown to yield appearances rather than things in themselves, it automatically follows that the categories and principles of pure understanding will also yield cognition only of appearances. Nevertheless, Kant reaffirms transcendental idealism during the course of the Transcendental Analytic.

The Transcendental Dialectic, the second section of the Transcendental Logic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which Kant provides the critique of traditional metaphysics is explicitly intended to give an indirect proof of transcendental idealism (B xx) (Guyer 1987: ch. 18 and again Proops 2021: chs. 10 and 12). Specifically, the middle section of the Dialectic, entitled "The Antinomy of Pure Reason," is supposed to provide this indirect proof. All three sections of the Dialectic, thus the preceding "Paralogisms of Pure Reason" and the following "Ideal of Pure Reason," are supposed to show that the faculty of reason's inevitable conception of the "unconditioned," that which is a condition for everything else but itself has no condition, can never provide knowledge of any object because knowledge requires intuition as well as concept, and intuition is always conditioned—the representation of any region of space is conditioned by more surrounding it, and that of any region of time is likewise conditioned by the representation of more time before and after it. Reason can form "transcendental ideas," more properly, "transcendent concepts" (A 327/B 384), that is, the ideas of an unconditioned subject (the self as substance), an unconditioned whole of all things and events (a completed world-whole), and an unconditioned ground of all possibility (God) (A 334/B 393). These ideas, according to Kant, may be useful as guidelines for scientific research and even necessary for the

purposes of practical reason, but they outrun the limits of intuition and therefore theoretical cognition. This general claim itself does not entail transcendental idealism, that is, it does not identify space and time with our own forms of intuition. However, Kant's claim is that the paradoxes diagnosed in the "Antinomy of Pure Reason" can only be resolved on the basis of transcendental idealism. In the case of the first two antinomies he argues that both sides essentially concern space and time or the things in them (these are the arguments that as we saw were missing from Arthur Collier's anticipation of the first two antinomies), and that since space and time as forms of intuition are *indefinitely* extendable and divisible, both sides of the debates, the theses and the antitheses, are false: space and time and thus the totality of things and events in them (the world) are neither bounded and finite nor unbounded and infinite but indefinite (even though particular things within space or periods within time may have determinate boundaries). In the case of the third and fourth antinomies, however, Kant argues that the distinction between appearances and things in themselves that is at the heart of transcendental idealism makes it possible for both sides to be considered true, since they concern different objects: in the empirical world of experience, there are only ever indefinitely extending chains of causes and effects, each moment of which is necessary relative to its causal laws (the third antithesis) but contingent because no antecedent cause is absolutely necessary or necessary considered in itself, but outside of the empirical world there is nothing to prevent there being an absolutely necessary thing in itself (God) nor acts of absolute spontaneity on the part of that absolutely necessary being or even lesser beings, such as finite agents like us. Thus, Kant argues that the antitheses of the third and fourth antinomies are actually true of the world as it appears, while the theses of these two antinomies are possibly true of things in themselves, namely of God as the ground of the entire world of appearance and of ourselves as spontaneous agents grounding our own appearances of action—and again, Kant's ultimate claim will be that while we have necessary and sufficient *practical* grounds for rational belief although not theoretical cognition in the existence of God (B xxx), the foundational "fact" of pure practical reason seems to include the real fact of our own noumenal freedom (*CPrR* 5: 30).

Kant's antinomies led to the dialectical methods of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and were thus to prove immensely influential. But it was clearly controversial whether the antinomies in fact required the distinction between appearances and things in themselves; Hegel, for example, surely thought not. For the argument that only transcendental idealism can resolve

the antinomies seems to be circular: unless one assumes that our *representations* of space and time give us not only reliable but also complete information about the nature of space and time and all things in them, there is no reason to assume that the limits of our *representations* of space and time—their indefiniteness and the contingency of any starting or stopping point in them—are also in fact true of space and time and everything in them in themselves. Kant's indirect proof for transcendental idealism therefore is not conclusive (see Guyer 1987: ch. 18).

Kant himself did not think so, of course. He was utterly committed to transcendental idealism. When confronted with the challenge that transcendental idealism was nothing but Berkeleianism, however, that is, the reduction of all reality to ideas and the minds that have them, he recoiled. This objection was made in the first substantial review of the first edition of the *Critique*, written from an empiricist point of view by Christian Garve and then redacted by J. G. H. Feder in 1782 (Feder and Garve 1782; Garve 1783 in Sassen 2000: 53–8, 59–77). Kant defended himself by a more precise formulation of his doctrine in the *Prolegomena* (1783) and further by the insertion of a "Refutation of Idealism," specifically "material idealism," into the Transcendental Analytic in the second edition of the *Critique* (1787). Kant's claim in the *Prolegomena* is that his position should be called "formal" or "critical" idealism rather than "material" idealism because it merely identifies space and time with our forms of intuition but does not otherwise deny the reality of the objects in space and time. As he puts it:

> There are things given to us as objects of our senses existing outside us, yet we know nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are acquainted only with their appearances, i.e., with the representations that they produce in us because they affect our senses. Accordingly, I by all means avow that there are bodies outside us, i.e., things which, though completely unknown to us as to what they may be in themselves, we know through the representations which their influence on our sensibility provides for us, and to which we give the name of a body—which word therefore merely signifies the appearance of this object that is unknown to us but is nonetheless real. Can this be called idealism? It is the very opposite of it.
>
> (*Prolegomena* §13, Note II, 4: 288–9)

At this stage, Kant's response to the identification of his position with traditional ontological idealism is basically incredulity: he cannot understand it because in his view he has only given reasons for removing space

and time from things to our representations of them, just as earlier philosophers had given (different) reasons for relocating properties like color from object to subject, but has provided no arguments against the existence of those things themselves, which he, like any other sane person, takes for granted.

By the time of the second edition of the *Critique*, however, Kant must have come to see the need for a positive defense of the assumption of the existence of things in themselves that ground our spatio-temporal representations of body (although, since those things in themselves are not supposed to be spatio-temporal and causality is supposed to be a spatio-temporal relation, they cannot precisely be said to *cause* our spatio-temporal representations). Kant's argument—which in the following years he would attempt to improve a dozen times (see Guyer 1983; Guyer 1987: Part IV; and Kant 2005: Reflexionen 5653–4 and 6311–19, 6323)—is that we can only achieve "empirically determined consciousness" of our own existence, or a determinate temporal ordering of our own representations, by correlating them with something enduring outside of and distinct from them:

> The perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a *thing* outside me and not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me. (B 275)

Spatiality may be acknowledged to be only my way of *representing* things outside me, but insofar as anything in space is used to determine the order of my own representations it must be regarded as being ontologically distinct from my representations of it even if its phenomenology is subjective, that is, even if spatiality is only our way of representing ontological independence (see A 22/B 37). In this way Kant proves, contra Berkeley who denies it and Descartes who doubts it, that our phenomenologically spatial representations are "grounded" in something ontologically distinct from those representations. Kant's "Refutation" was intended precisely to demonstrate that transcendental idealism, the argument that our most basic forms of knowledge in fact reflect only our own forms of intuition and conceptualization, could and must be combined with indeterminate ontological realism, that is, assurance of the existence of objects independent of our representations of them combined with ignorance of their nature, other than their non-spatio-temporality. (For alternative approaches to the "Refutation of Idealism," see Vogel 1993 and Emundts 2010.)

It may well be asked of Kant's "Refutation of Idealism," as it had already been asked of his yet-to-be-named transcendental idealism in 1770 by such distinguished contemporaries as Johann Heinrich Lambert (1728–77), Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–79), and Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), whether it is really compatible with the transcendental ideality of *time*, that is, whether it does not presuppose the reality of the temporality of the enduring object by means of which it proposes to determine the sequence of our own representations as well as of the self that has that sequence of representations. Isn't the sequence of representations itself, they essentially asked, really a sequence, and therefore undeniably real, even if spatiality may be merely apparent? But we will not further pursue that question here, because all of Kant's successors were more concerned with the viability of Kant's general distinction between appearances and things in themselves rather than with the specifics of Kant's argument for transcendental idealism from a priori knowledge or with the details of Kant's proof that we can assert the existence of things in themselves in spite of that distinction. This concern began with the famous objection of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743–1819), made in the appendix to his 1787 book on David Hume (Jacobi 1787), that without the assumption of things in themselves he could not enter into the critical system, but that with it he could not remain within the system: that is, he felt that once the distinction between appearances and things in themselves was made, any ground for the assumption of the existence of things other than our own representations had been removed even if Kant had made no explicit argument against that existence. Our next steps will rather be to consider how Kant deployed his transcendental idealism to develop his moral philosophy in his second and third critiques, and to take a brief look at his attempt to reformulate the doctrine in the final work that he attempted but failed to complete, which survived in the sheaf of notes that came to be known as his *Opus postumum*. Neither in his moral philosophy nor in the combination of aesthetics and teleology in the guise of a theory of the "subjective" and "objective purposiveness" of nature that comprises Kant's third critique (its theory of fine art can be considered as a sort of appendix to its main argument) does Kant offer any new definition of or argument for his transcendental idealism. Rather, he attempts to exploit transcendental idealism for the defense of positions that he holds dear—the actuality of freedom of the will and rational belief in the existence of a God who makes possible the realization of maximal happiness through maximal virtue that Kant calls the highest good—in the face of the thoroughgoing determinism that he has himself imposed on the world as

we experience it. Many details of Kant's reconciliation of his naturalistic and deterministic conception of experience with his conception of the necessarily "supersensible" grounds of the possibility of morality will be rejected by the subsequent generation of German idealists, but the general project of demonstrating, as Hegel will put it, that the real is also rational, is the heir to Kant's transcendental idealism. So understanding how Kant attempted to reveal the moral significance of transcendental idealism is necessary for our larger story.

Kant expounded his moral philosophy in three main works, the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* of 1785, in which he attempted to clearly formulate and ground (*aufsuchen und feststellen*) the "fundamental principle" of morality and then prove that we have the freedom of the will necessary always to be able to act in accordance with this principle; the *Critique of Practical Reason* of 1788, in which he tried again to prove the reality of freedom of the will and guarantee the possibility of realizing the highest good, the combination of virtue and happiness that is the "complete object" of morality; and the late *Metaphysics of Morals* of 1797, comprising two parts, the *Metaphysical Foundations of the Doctrine of Right* and of the *Doctrine of Virtue*, in which Kant lays out a full system of human duties, both those that can and should be coercively enforced by the public institutions of the state (the duties of right) and those that can only be enforced by each human being's own respect for the moral law (ethical duties). But Kant had previously argued for at least the possibility of freedom of the will as well as for the rationality of belief in the existence of God and human immortality in the "Canon of Pure Reason" in the Doctrine of Method of the first *Critique*, and in the third *Critique* he continues the attempt to "bridge" the "great gulf" between the laws of nature and the laws of freedom by means of transcendental idealism that he had begun in the second *Critique*, so we need to look at those works too. Finally, in the unfinished *Opus postumum* Kant seems to have been attempting to recast our ideas of both nature and God as projections of our own mind, an idealist project if there ever were one. But since that material became accessible only in the twentieth century, it played no role in the historical development of idealism, and we will have to omit discussion of it here.

We begin with the link between Kant's transcendental idealism and his moral philosophy. In the third Antinomy of Pure Reason in the first *Critique* Kant had argued that while in the domain of appearance as we experience it every event must be seen as determined by an antecedent one *ad infinitum* (or more properly *ad indefinitum*) and thus there is no room for freedom of

the will as Kant understands it, the radical freedom to choose between any action and its contrary no matter what one's past history might seem to determine, in the non-spatio-temporal domain of things as they actually are, in themselves, there is at least room for genuine spontaneity, that is the origination of a series of events from a first cause that is not itself caused and thus determined by anything else. In the first instance, Kant argues that this allows for the possible existence of God as an uncaused ground outside of the entire series of events that comprise the world of experience, but he also notes that the distinction between uncaused ground at the noumenal level and always causally determined events at the phenomenal allows for the possibility of multiple instances of noumenal spontaneity, thus for the possibility of completely free choices by ourselves regarded as things in ourselves rather than as mere appearances. As he puts it, once "the faculty of beginning a series in time entirely on its own [has been] proved (though no insight into it is achieved), now we are permitted also to allow that in the course of the world different series may begin on their own as far as their causality is concerned, and to ascribe to the substances in those series"—namely, ourselves—"the faculty of acting from freedom" (A 450/B 478).

Establishing the *possibility* of freedom of the human will is as far as the *Critique of Pure Reason* is usually thought to have gone, and indeed seems to be what Kant thought that it had established when he came to write his moral philosophy: only there, he suggests in the second *Critique*, can the *reality* of freedom as a property of the human but noumenal will be established. But actually even in the first *Critique* Kant had at least suggested a stronger result. In his extended commentary on the resolution of the third Antinomy, Kant introduces a distinction between "empirical" and "intelligible" character. The former is how we appear to ourselves in space and time, and as far as this is concerned, "its actions, as appearances, would stand through and through in connection with other appearances in accordance with constant natural laws, from which, as their conditions, they could be derived." No room for freedom of the will here. But transcendental idealism allows for the possibility of intelligible character at the noumenal level, "through which it"—that is, the human will—"is indeed the cause of those actions as appearances, but which does not stand under any conditions of sensibility and is not itself appearance" (A 539/B 567). Plenty of room for freedom here, although it would not seem that the distinction between phenomenal and noumenal, transposed into the domain of character, the subject of moral responsibility, as the distinction between empirical and

intelligible, does anything more than leave room for the possibility of freedom. However, a few pages later Kant writes:

> Yet the human being, who is otherwise acquainted with the whole of nature solely through sense, knows himself also through pure apperception, and indeed in actions and inner determinations which cannot be counted at all among impressions of sense; he obviously is in one part phenomenon, but in another part, namely in regard to certain faculties, he is a merely intelligible object, because the actions of this object cannot at all be ascribed to the receptivity of sensibility. We call these faculties understanding and reason . . . Now that this reason has causality, or that we can at least represent something of the sort in it, is clear from the **imperatives** that we propose as rules to our powers of execution in everything practical.
>
> (A 546–7/B 574–5)

Here Kant seems to be going beyond the position that the distinction between appearances and things in themselves makes freedom of the will *possible*; he seems to be saying that in addition to our knowledge of ourselves as sensibly affected and passive, we have, through "pure apperception," knowledge of ourselves as genuinely active, or spontaneous, and able to act in accordance with imperatives, including those of morality, no matter what the history of our empirical character might seem to predict or entail. This is very much the position that Kant will adopt in the *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, and which might be called transcendental idealism proper, attributing to ourselves as we really are a property compatible with our nature as mental even if not with our spatio-temporal, causally determined appearance. Or we might call this position the transcendental realism of idealism: it asserts that we really are mind-like free wills, not really causally determined bodies at all.

Yet in the first *Critique* Kant again seems to shy away from this assertion, going so far as to say that "we have not even tried to prove the **possibility** of freedom, . . . because from mere concepts *a priori* we cannot cognize anything about the possibility of any real ground or any causality. Freedom is treated here only as a transcendental idea . . . that nature at least **does not conflict** with causality through freedom—that was the one single thing we could accomplish . . ." (A 558/B 586).

But whether or not Kant thought that he could show that we have genuine knowledge through pure apperception of the real freedom of our will in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that is exactly the claim that he makes in the

Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. Before we come to that, however, we need a quick look at Kant's argument for rational belief in God and our own immortality, belief that can be part of idealism but not materialism, in the "Canon of Pure Reason." Here Kant claims that it is only in its pure practical—that is, moral—use that reason allows a "canon," a determinate set of rules for its use—in the theoretical case, reason's ideas of the "unconditioned" can yield regulative but not constitutive principles. Kant will ultimately qualify this claim about pure practical reason, for his final position is that while pure reason yields a fundamental principle of morality valid for any and all rational beings, it must be applied to some specific facts about human nature and human circumstances to yield the specific juridical and ethical duties of human beings (*MM* Introduction, 6: 217). In the "Canon" Kant also claims that under ideal circumstances, in an entirely moral world, "a system of happiness proportionately combined with morality can also be thought as necessary, since freedom, partly moved and partly restricted by moral laws, would itself be the cause of the general happiness" (A 809/B 837). Kant does not explain this claim, and the reason for it emerges only in the *Groundwork*: morality requires that each person be treated as an end in herself, that means that the particular ends that each sets for herself must be treated as ends for all insofar as they are compatible, and since happiness is what results from the realization of agents' ends, in a fully moral world the greatest possible happiness would be achieved, although that is not the direct object of morality. But, Kant continues in the "Canon," in the real world not everyone is fully moral, far from it, so those who are virtuous must be able to hope that "God and a future life" will at least make their own happiness possible (A 811/B 829) if their own resolve to be moral is not to be undermined (A 813/B 841; cf. *CPJ* §87, 5: 452). God and the possibility of a future life cannot be understood in materialistic terms, so there is a basis for rational belief in if not theoretical cognition of a real idealism in this argument.

Kant comes back to, and revises, the argument about the highest good in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, but first a word about Kant's argument for the reality of freedom in the *Groundwork*. (Needless to say, the literature on the *Groundwork*, one of the most widely read works in all of philosophy, is vast; a few useful commentaries are Paton 1947; O'Neill 1975/2013; Rawls 2000; Guyer 2007; and Allison 2011). In the first two sections of that book, Kant analyzes, first, what he takes to be common concepts of a "good will" and duty and, second, the philosophical concept of a categorical imperative, that is, a moral command that holds for any agent regardless of her

particular desires. As he does in the opening moves of the second *Critique* also, Kant takes it for granted that any moral theory will recognize that the fundamental principle of morality must hold categorically, without exceptions. Kant formulates the categorical imperative in three main steps, culminating in the formulation that every agent must act only on maxims that would transform the realm of nature into an "empire of ends," a "systematic connection . . . both of rational beings as ends in themselves and of the ends of his own that each may set for himself" (*Groundwork* 4: 433, cf. 4: 436)—the formulation of the categorical imperative that can explain the link between morality and happiness that was assumed in the "Canon" of the first *Critique*. Kant's position is that all of this may be derived by analysis of the *concept* of a rational being, but that it requires a further "synthetic" step to show that the results of this analysis apply to and bind *us*, actual human beings. He attempts this further step in the third section of the *Groundwork* by appeal to his doctrine of transcendental idealism: we can distinguish between appearance and thing in itself even in our own case, but, he assumes, while our empirical knowledge of our selves is governed by the structures of space, time, and the categories, and is thus subject to causal determinism, we also have insight into the "self-activity" or spontaneity of our own pure reason, and the only possible law of this activity is the moral law, precisely because of its independence from particular, empirically given desires (*Groundwork* 4: 451–2). As we saw Kant do at one moment in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he thus claims that we must regard ourselves "*as intelligence* . . . as belonging not to the world of sense" but "as belonging to the intelligible world" (*Groundwork* 4: 452). This is an assertion of real idealism, that is, of the intelligent and therefore mental nature of our being at its most fundamental level. Kant makes this argument in a moral context, but he does not appear to restrict its force by claiming that it is a mere "rational belief" or, in the term in which he will next introduce in the second *Critique*, a "postulate of pure practical reason." He just asserts it.

This brings us then to that second *Critique*. (The main commentary in English remains Beck 1960.) This book makes two revisions to the positions Kant has advanced in the first *Critique* and the *Groundwork*. After an initial restatement of the argument for the categorical imperative that Kant had made in the previous book, although here only in the form of what had there been its first formulation, the requirement that we act only on maxims that we could also will to be "practical universal laws" (*CPrR* 5: 27), Kant devotes the bulk of the work to further development of his accounts of freedom of the will and the highest good. While Kant's metaphysical, idealist theory of

free will remains the same, he reverses the order of argument for it (see Ameriks 1982/2000: ch. 6): instead of arguing from our knowledge of our real self-activity as intelligence to the binding validity of the moral law for us, as he does in the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that we have immediate awareness of the binding force of the moral law, as the fundamental "fact of reason," but that this brings along with it knowledge of our possession of a "pure will": the moral law directs us to set aside all "empirical conditions"—that is, desires—for our actions, and our pure will makes it possible for us to actually do so (*CPrR* 5: 30–1). Kant illustrates this with an example, a person who knows that because he *ought* to refuse to bear false witness he *can* do so (even if he does not know whether he *will*). This illustration relies on the principle that "ought implies can," but this principle becomes an essential part of Kant's argument only in the further book *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* because there Kant has separated the pure will into two parts, the pure *Wille* which gives the moral law and is thus identical to pure practical reason, and the faculty of choice, or *Willkür*, by which the agent decides whether or not to act in accordance with the moral law. These two separate parts need to be linked by the principle that "ought implies can," while in the *Critique of Pure Practical Reason* the ability to give ourselves a pure moral law and the ability to choose to act in accordance with it were two sides of the one coin immediately given as the "fact of reason." But either way, the basic position remains the same as in the *Groundwork*: while our empirical character is spatio-temporal and fully subject to causal laws and thus to determinism, our real, intelligible character is that of spontaneous rationality. This must be considered a full-throated version of idealism.

When it comes to immortality and God, however, Kant's position in the second *Critique* is qualified as "rational belief" or "postulate" rather than straightforward "fact of reason." Kant's position also seems to be conflicted. For he argues that we need to postulate personal immortality in order to allow sufficient progress toward the full realization of virtue, which we certainly do not observe in ordinary human nature as empirically known (5: 122), but he also argues that we need to postulate God as the *author* or "supreme cause" *of a nature* the laws of which are compatible with the moral law, and thus allow for the realization of happiness as a consequence of virtue *in nature* (5: 125–6). These two postulates seem contradictory because they suppose that human virtue can be perfected only in a non-natural eternal existence but that the happiness that should ensue from the perfection of virtue must be able to be realized within nature, thus apparently

before the perfection of virtue. But even if the position is contradictory, it does seem to be idealist rather than materialist: surely humans are supposed to be immortal only as minds, not as bodies, and equally surely God is not conceived of as a body, but as some sort of super-intelligence. The pious Bishop Berkeley would not have been unhappy with this result.

Kant rarely admitted that he had changed his mind about anything, at least after his turn to the "critical philosophy" in 1781. Nevertheless, his 1793 *Religion* can be seen as resolving the tension between the postulate of immortality and that of God as the author of nature by reinterpreting free will as allowing for the possibility of a "change of heart" or fundamental maxim, from the "radical evil" inherent in the choice to subordinate morality to self-love to the radical goodness or virtue of subordinating self-love to morality, *at any time*, or at least as what appears to us, in our phenomenal, temporal self-presentation, as at any time (see especially *Religion* 6: 66–7). This means that we do not need eternity to perfect our virtue, but that doing so is always open to us within our natural lives, although on the basis of our noumenal freedom; thus there is no contradiction between the condition for the possibility of the perfection of virtue and that for the possibility of the highest good, namely that (we can rationally believe that) God has so designed nature as to make happiness possible if people are virtuous.

Kant does not explicitly return to this point in the *Religion*, but it is the underlying theme of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). This book is divided into two halves, the first dealing with what Kant calls aesthetic judgment, on beauty and sublimity in nature and on beauty in fine art (see Guyer 1979/1997; Allison 2001; Guyer 2005a), the second with what he calls teleological judgment, judgment on "purposiveness" within certain parts of nature, namely organisms, but also within nature as a whole. His claim is that beauty, sublimity, and purposiveness in nature are all "ideal" in the sense of being located strictly speaking within the human mind rather than within nature itself (*CPJ* §§58, 73, 75). In the case of aesthetic judgment, Kant argues that such judgments, although based on a judge's own feeling of pleasure, claim "subjectively universal validity" or to speak with a "universal voice" (§§7–8), that is, to be valid for any human being who approaches their object in an optimal frame of mind, not distracted by any personal interest, assuming that the judge who first makes the judgment has also been in an optimal condition to do so (see §19). He first explains that this claim is rational because our pleasure in a beautiful object is based in a "free play" of our imagination and understanding (the explanation in the case of the sublime and of artistic beauty is somewhat more complicated, because

those involve the faculty of reason, or in the case of fine art, ideas of reason as well), and imagination and understanding, as the conditions of the possibility of knowledge in general, can be assumed to work the same way in all human beings (§§21, 38). But then he sets up an "antinomy of taste" which, like all of Kant's antinomies, is supposed to be resolved only by transcendental idealism, namely, by the supposition that there is a "supersensible substratum" that grounds both harmony among human cognitive natures and between the human cognitive capacities and nature itself. This is clearly a step toward a substantive idealism. Along the way, Kant argues that although our pleasure in beauty must in the first instance be disinterested, we take an interest in the fact of the existence of such pleasure, based in the fact that natural beauty gives us a clue that nature is receptive to our concerns, including foremost our moral concerns (§42)—of course we have an interest, the interest of reason, in the possibility of the realization of our moral goals, and therefore in the existence of any sort of evidence for this realizability. Kant interprets our experience of natural beauty as some sort of evidence of the harmony between nature and morality that is the condition of the possibility of the highest good, grounded in the second *Critique* in the postulate of or rational belief in the existence of God.

This line of thought becomes more explicit in the second half of the third *Critique*, the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment." (See McLaughlin 1990; Guyer 2005b: Parts I and III; and Zuckert 2007.) Here Kant argues that we humans are capable of understanding organic processes such as growth, self-maintenance, and reproduction only by thinking of organisms "as if" they had been designed by an intelligent designer, an obvious step toward idealism. Although his approach is no doubt undercut by the synthesis of Darwinian natural selection and Mendelian genetics characteristic of twentieth-century biology, which has the general form of a physical or mechanical explanation of such apparent purposiveness in biology, Kant thought that the "antinomy" between the mechanical explanation that we seek in all science and the teleological explanation, explanation by antecedent design, that we are forced to in thinking about organisms, and that we then generalize to nature as a whole, could be resolved only by thinking of nature as a whole "as if" it were the product of an intelligent designer outside of nature, achieving its purposes—for it must have such—through the laws of nature (§§73, 77). Kant maintains that this is not "dogmatic," thus not constitutive theoretical metaphysics; thus he does not go so far toward real idealism here as he does in the case of our own freedom. Nevertheless he links this line of argument to the fact of our

own freedom by arguing that the "final end" of nature can only be something "unconditioned" and therefore outside of nature, and that this can be nothing other than human freedom, fully developed in morality but also requiring the realizability of the highest good in nature (§84; see especially Guyer 2005b: ch. 12). Thus Kant's entire philosophy culminates in a complex form of idealism: transcendental ideality with regard to space and time, which includes the assertion of the non-spatiality and -temporality of things in themselves, including ourselves as we are in our selves, outright assertion of the freedom of our own intelligible character, and therefore its essentially mental rather than physical character, and the postulate or possibility of rational belief in if not theoretical knowledge of an intelligent, therefore mind-like, ground of nature itself.

It is in this context, further, that Kant discusses the idea of an intuitive understanding, a concept that would become of utmost importance for the post-Kantian German idealists, especially the early Fichte and Schelling, in their attempts to give a new foundation to what they took to be the ultimate aim of Kant's philosophy. In §77 of the third *Critique*, Kant, somewhat regretfully, dismisses the idea that human beings can rely in our explanations of natural phenomena on an intuitive understanding because of the ineliminable discursivity of our understanding, by which he means that we always have to apply general concepts to particular intuitions, although general concepts can never capture all of the richness of particular objects (an idea that Kant gets from Leibniz and Baumgarten). According to Kant, it is also because of this discursivity that we human beings are not allowed to think of ends as real causes. Instead, we have to treat all explanations that involve the concept of an end, that is, all teleological explanations and especially those that concern organisms understood as natural ends (*Naturzwecke*), as only subjectively valid and provisional. They are conditioned by our inability "to represent the possibility of parts (with respect to their constitution and their relation) as being dependent on the whole," an inability that is rooted in the discursive character of human thought. The early German idealists not only did not share this Kantian humility about the limitations of our human understanding; they vehemently resisted it in a number of different ways, all designed to overcome Kant's assessment.

Kant himself ended up with a complex position, combining the undeniable insight that the most fundamental forms of knowledge ultimately depend on fundamental operations of self-consciousness with more contentious claims, such as that the possibility of morality requires a kind of freedom incompatible with the most basic assumption of natural science, that causal explanation

is always possible. He mapped these positions onto a complicated ontology that reduces space and time to mere appearance and in different regards both denies and assumes the possibility of knowledge of things as they are in themselves. We will now see how Kant's immediate successors tried to cope with this complex inheritance.

5
German Idealism

Kant's view about how we must conceive of both the natural and the moral world in all its different aspects had an enormous impact both within and beyond the academic scene in late eighteenth-century Germany. His uncompromising fight for reason and rationality as the sole arbiter of right and wrong in all spheres of life provoked massive reactions in many intellectual communities, especially those involved in theological, political, and social debates. All these debates took place within the overall struggle in the third part of the eighteenth-century between supporters of the Enlightenment on the one hand and their anti-Enlightenment opponents on the other. The main representatives of the later German Enlightenment movement at that time were Moses Mendelssohn, the philosopher and biblical scholar, as well as businessman Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), the dramatist, art critic, and philosopher as well, and of course Kant himself. They were vigorously opposed by notables including Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, a novelist, what we now call a public intellectual, and also a philosopher (both his philosophical works and his novel *Allwill* are translated in Jacobi 1994); Thomas Wizenmann (1759–87), a young Protestant theologian whom Kant mentions in a footnote of his second *Critique*, although to straighten him out on the difference between a postulate of pure practical reason and mere wish-fulfillment (*CPrR* 5: 143n.); Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), a former student of Kant's who became one of the leading Protestant theologians and cultural philosophers of his time, considered now one of the founders of historicism and cultural relativism (although those terms were not available at the time); and Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88), another wayward friend of Kant who opposed his own mystical Christianity to Kant's religion of pure reason. (On the idea of an anti-Enlightenment, or as he called it the "Counter-Enlightenment," see famously Berlin 2013a and 2013b; Guyer 2020a explores relations between Kant and Mendelssohn as two figures within the German Enlightenment, while Beiser 1987 and Guyer forthcoming discuss many of Kant's most immediate critics.) Whereas Kant and the other dominant figures of the Enlightenment fought against superstition in religion and for human rights

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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in politics and equality in social relations by relying on the validity of the fundamental principles of rationality, the anti-Enlighteners were distrustful of rationality as the guideline for all problems and questions concerning both the natural world and the human world of morality, society, politics, and culture. They pointed to limitations and paradoxes inherent in the very concept of rationality as employed by the proponents of the Enlightenment with the intention to re-establish what they took to be a basic truth that more and different resources than enlightened rationality are needed to account for what is going on in the natural and what should go on in the moral, social, and cultural world. Of course, Kant had insisted that reason could lead to paradoxes, but that those could be corrected by reason itself through "critique." For the anti-Enlighteners, however, such central elements of Kant's philosophy as his insistence on the distinction between appearances and things in themselves on epistemological grounds and on the restriction of the reality of freedom to practical contexts were taken to be paradigmatic of the unworldliness and remoteness from everyday life not just of Kant's philosophy but of the Enlightenment in general.

However, the conflict over the limits of rationality was not the only, perhaps not even the main, issue. Of equal importance in the ongoing dispute was the question as to the conception of the subject that interacts as a knower and an actor with the world. Here Kant was seen, especially by Jacobi, as favoring a model according to which the subject of knowledge and action is the product of a spontaneous act that gives rise to rules of object-formation both in a theoretical sense, on the basis of the categories of the understanding on the one hand, and in a practical sense via the categorical imperative of pure practical reason on the other. But Kant's fundamental idea that the subject of all conscious activity, the I, has to be conceived of as consisting in an "act of spontaneity" (*CpuR* B 132) that lies at the basis of our ability to become conscious of objects was met with incomprehension, if not positively ridiculed by many of his contemporaries, again most explicitly by Jacobi. The main reason for this incomprehension was that Kant connected with his conception of self-consciousness or the I as an "act of spontaneity" the further claim that although all consciousness of objects depends on this spontaneous act the act itself can never become an object (even though, as we saw in both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the third section of the *Groundwork* Kant sometimes did claim that we could cognize our own spontaneity or "self-activity" through pure apperception). In any case, Kant's opponents objected to his distinction between the unknowable "transcendental" I and the knowable "empirical" I, the former denoting the I as

subject of all knowledge, the latter the I as an object of knowledge. The questions that were asked by many, either confused or irritated or both, were: does Kant really want to confront us with a double I, one of which is categorically inaccessible to any knowledge whatsoever? If this is really his intention, how do we have to conceive of the relation in which these different I's stand to each other? Does it make sense or is it even possible to think of them as being identical, being the same? What would sameness or identity amount to in this case? And above all: if there indeed is a rational basis for this doubling of the I, of self-consciousness, does it not speak against a conception of rationality that gives birth to such results? It is easy to comprehend how questions like these could lead to the impression that if such a conception of rationality lies at the root of the demands and commands of the Enlightenment, then one should be skeptical of the entire movement.

Among those who were profoundly influenced by the ongoing dispute on how to assess the Enlightenment in general and its Kantian underpinnings in particular were all the philosophers who were later labeled as the "German idealists," thus Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), and Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). All of them started as students of theology who for different reasons moved on to philosophy. They had in common a vital interest in and (in the case of Fichte and Hegel) a quite persistent enthusiasm for what they took to be the major aim of the French revolution, namely to establish a society of free, equal, and brotherly united citizens that is based on rational principles. Their positive attitude toward the French revolution with its emphasis on freedom and rationality led them to sympathize in their youth with what they saw as the center of Kant's project in philosophy as documented in his three *Critiques*. Although from early on they differed among themselves on how to understand Kant correctly, they by and large agreed that for Kant (1) spontaneity is the fundamental source of all world- and self-relations, (2) the reality of freedom is the basis of the primacy of practical reason, and (3) rationality is the sole criterion of claims to validity in all areas of discourse. In particular, they took the Introduction to Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* to be the founding document of a revolutionary approach to philosophy in its entirety, an approach that would open up the dead ends in which traditional philosophical theories were trapped and replace them with a system that did justice to reason in the evaluation of all matters of concern to human beings, be it in knowledge, morals, or aesthetics. Whether or not they were right in their assessment of

Kant's intentions in the three *Critiques* is by no means obvious and has been controversial ever since. (The literature on German idealism and its relation to Kant is far too great to list here; for a start, see Beiser 2002; Pinkard 2002; Henrich 2003; Horstmann 2004; di Giovanni 2005; and Förster 2011 [2013]. For an exhaustive survey of the "systems of pure reason and their critique, 1785–1845," see Jaeschke and Arndt 2012. For a multi-author collection, see Ameriks ed. 2000b.)

Although all of the German idealists proclaimed their commitment to what they called the "spirit" of Kant's philosophy throughout their careers, they were at the same time his harshest critics. They complained not about what they took to be the intentions lying behind Kant's so-called "critical" project but about the execution of this task in the form of the three *Critiques*. These complaints addressed many different aspects of Kant's philosophy, among them most prominently (1) what they called the insurmountable "dualisms" (see Guyer 2000) that are supposed to play an essential role in both Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy and in his resolution of the supposed antinomy of teleological judgment as well. They also complained about (2) the subjectivism characteristic of his teachings in all of their parts, that is his view that the world of experience as the object of science but also of aesthetic and teleological judgment is very much our own construction, and they were very critical of (3) what for them was the most implausible consequence of Kant's transcendental idealism, namely that no knowledge of things in themselves is possible (although, as we saw, Kant never doubted the *existence* of things in themselves, and also seemed to breach the insuperable barrier to our knowledge of their nature at least in the case of freedom of the will). As to (1) they objected (a) that in his theoretical philosophy Kant insisted on the irreducible opposition between the faculties of sensibility and understanding and hence between intuitions and concepts in the fabric of knowledge, (b) that in his practical philosophy he advocated the acceptance of two totally disjointed worlds, a sensible and an intelligible world (*mundus sensibilis atque intelligibilis*), in both of which a rational person has to be situated, and (c) that in order to account for the organic world of living beings one has to accept two different modes of explanation, the mechanical and the teleological, of which only the former has objective validity while the latter is merely subjectively valid (a distinction that Kant made *within* the empirical standpoint, since from the point of view of transcendental idealism *all* of our representations of the world are informed by our own cognitive structure, the forms of intuition on the one hand and of conceptualization and judgment on the other). The charge (2) of

subjectivism was directed against the claim purportedly endorsed by Kant in his transcendental idealism that there is no subject-independent concept of objectivity available on which to rely in evaluating knowledge-claims but that what we ordinarily call "objectivity" is a construct grounded in subjective activities of our cognitive faculties.

However, it was most notably (3), the idea imputed to Kant that there are things in themselves of which no knowledge is possible, that was the main target of the criticism voiced by these early Kantians against Kant's philosophical edifice, because according to them this position opened the floodgates to skepticism in epistemology on the one hand and to nihilism in morals and religion on the other. Thus it is no wonder that from early on the German idealists were extremely unsympathetic toward and distrustful of what they considered to be the underlying basis of the doctrine of things in themselves, namely transcendental idealism, and that they tried to replace this brand of idealism with other versions.

As we have seen, Kant made two major points with his transcendental idealism. First, although he never doubted the existence of something independent of our representations of objects, he claimed to have shown that on theoretical grounds we can know nothing about the ultimate constitution of this reality as it might be independently of the way it appears to beings endowed with understanding, reason, and in particular human, spatio-temporal sensibility; when it comes to the domain of practice, however, he sometimes maintains that we can rationally believe in our own, nondeterministic freedom along with our own immortality and the existence of God as the condition of the rationality of our efforts to be moral, although in the first case he sometimes goes further and claims that we can know in pure apperception that we really are free. In the theoretical case, indeed, Kant went so far as to deny that the real objects "affecting" us with sensory representations are substances and their attributes standing in spatio-temporal and causal relations to each other and constituting a law-governed whole of nature. But since, according to Kant, we can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God on theoretical grounds, we cannot know that what we experience as objects are in the end mental products of a divine mind having creative powers totally different from those that we find in nature. Thus Kant holds that from a theoretical point of view we cannot assert classical idealism, that is, that everything that exists is either an idea or a mind, whether finite or divine. From this point of view we are bound to be agnostic with regard to any theoretical claims about the real constitution of the world, and thus we cannot assert either idealism or materialism about

things in themselves. However, whenever we think about objects of ordinary cognition, we have to accept them as being conceptual constructions based on our subjective forms of intuitions and on very specific conceptual rules for bringing together or unifying data: an object of cognition is that "in whose *concept* a manifold of that which is given through sensibility is united" (*CPuR* B 137). This means, according to Kant, that the assumption of the conceptual constitution of objects of cognition is unavoidable. This is the part of his position that Kant calls empirical realism. Yet at the same time, Kant does maintain that we can, indeed must rationally believe in the existence of an immaterial God, and sometimes goes so far as to claim that we know that we ourselves are free in a way that is incompatible with deterministic materialism. In this context Kant does maintain something much closer to traditional metaphysical idealism: God and our own true selves are not material objects.

What turned out to be Kant's highly complicated transcendental idealism was not accepted by the main representatives of post-Kantian German idealism. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, as already mentioned, immediately criticized Kant's allowance of things in themselves of unknown nature, and replaced it with a straightforward realism about external existence grounded in a fideism, or immediate belief, which he claimed, plausibly or not, to find in Hume's rejection of the psychological possibility of skepticism (e.g., Jacobi 1994: 273–4; see Beiser 1987 and Horstmann 2004). However, the general tendency of the post-Kantian idealists, beginning with Fichte, was to reject Kant's transcendental idealism by arguing that there is no real opposition between a subject-independent world present to us in the mode of "givenness" and "being" and a world conceived of as subject-dependent in that it is formed by conceptual tools or other "thought-ingredients" stemming from subjective activity. In other words, Kant's successors removed his restriction of a necessary isomorphism between knowledge and the known to the case of appearances, and took it to be a general relation between thought and being. This led to a new conception of idealism whose distinguishing character consists in the endorsement of the claim of the "inseparability of being and thinking," although the term "inseparability" sometimes connotes reciprocal dependence and sometimes strict identity. This conception was established primarily by epistemological considerations and introduced an entirely new way of thinking about what ultimately constitutes reality, based on a dynamic conception of self-consciousness that the German idealists took to be at the heart of Kant's theory of the transcendental unity of apperception, which itself had been

introduced by Kant on the basis of epistemological, not ontological, considerations. According to this new conception, reality has to be conceived as a result of an activity paradigmatically manifested in the unique manner in which consciousness of oneself arises. Reality is the objectified expression of this activity, an activity whose nature is paradigmatically exhibited in acts of spontaneous thinking. Thus, in order to discover the true nature of reality one has to understand the operations of this activity.

This approach to fundamental metaphysical questions undercuts the traditional ontology of substances and their accidents or properties. It means that one has to characterize the difference between idealism and its opposite, which can go under the various names of realism, naturalism, materialism, sensualism, etc., not in terms of different kinds of "stuff" either material or mental, but in terms of the contrast between dynamic elements like activities and forces as the primary constituents of reality and more substantial items like material objects and (spiritual) persons. Idealism understood in this fashion becomes the name of a "metaphysical" (in a non-traditional sense) worldview that is opposed to what especially Fichte and Schelling liked to call "dogmatism," the latter being a view that encompasses traditional idealism and its opposites as well. This new idealism is rooted in assumptions about dynamic processes that are operative in the course of self- and object-constitution. There is thus a fundamental difference between the idealism of German idealism and the immaterialism of Berkeley: where Berkeley's idealism focused on ideas as the "stuff" of existence and assumed minds, whether human or divine, as their substratum, the German idealists focused on the spontaneous activities paradigmatically exemplified in thinking, understood as conceptualization as such, and acting, understood as inducing change on the basis of concepts. The German idealists did hold, in some form or other, that these activities, although conventionally taken to be activities of the mind, were the foundational elements out of which not just the physical, bodies and their forces, but also everything mental, the mind as a substance, originated through self-constituting "auto-poietic" processes. They largely tried to suppress the traditional ontology of substances and their accidents within which Berkeley still worked, which Hume questioned but for which he supplied no alternative, and which Kant again defended by conceiving of substance and accident as relational categories. Instead they favored conceptions of idealism that are meant to ground traditional substance ontology in operations and acts of autonomous forces and activities that in their spontaneous realization give rise to substances both physical and mental, that is, not only

to substantial bodies but also to minds conceived of as substances. Thus, for them Kant's transcendental idealism, although rightly giving priority to the spontaneous activity of self-consciousness in the attempt to account for the possibility of epistemic access to the world albeit only of appearances, nevertheless failed and remained a version of "dogmatism" by remaining committed to the opposition between substantial appearances and substantial things in themselves on the one hand and between minds and bodies on the other without establishing a common ground either between appearances and things in themselves, or between minds and bodies, or, most generally, between thinking and being. This critical assessment led them to the view that an idealism that is worth its name has to uncover what lies at the basis or what makes these oppositions possible, that is, it has to go beyond the opposition between thinking and being. Still, while refusing to accept an insuperable distinction between thinking and being might have led to some form of materialism if this purported unity were understood from the side of being, the idealists conceived of it primarily in terms of thinking, and thus remained, as their name implies, some form of idealists.

Although overcoming the distinction between thought and being by relying on self-relating activities might be regarded as the common goal of all the major German idealistic thinkers, they pursued this project in different ways. The first post-Kantian philosopher who embarked explicitly on the project of elaborating a dynamic idealistic conception of reality based on what he took to be conditions of cognition and agency and built on a specific conception of self-consciousness was Fichte while he was a professor at the university of Saxe-Weimar in Jena from 1794 to 1799. In his *Doctrine of Science* (1794/5) and in the *First* and *Second Introductions to the Doctrine of Science* (1797) he famously set out to demonstrate that the primordial act that he called "self-positing" lies at the basis of all reality *as far as it is an object of cognition and agency*. His starting point is an epistemological question: how come we cannot but experience objective reality the way that we do, namely in terms of spatio-temporal objects standing in determinate relations? Where do these representations of objects, of relations and especially the belief that they exist, come from? And, most importantly, how can we have knowledge of objective reality that is not subject to skeptical doubts? In order to answer these questions Fichte pursued different strategies at different times. But the best known and most influential of these attempts remains that of the first published version of his *Doctrine of Science*. In what follows we will focus primarily on the line of thought presented in this text, although Fichte changed his arguments considerably

in the *First* and *Second Introduction into the Doctrine of Science*. (For commentaries on Fichte's argument, see Henrich 2019; Neuhouser 1990; Horstmann 2004; Zöller 1998; and Breazeale 2013.)

Following the early *Doctrine of Science*, we must, according to Fichte, accept three fundamental principles (*Grundsätze*) of human knowledge without which we could not even make sense of the idea that we can know that there is something real at all. The first states that self-consciousness or the I is a spontaneous, unconditioned act that creates or "posits" the I as having existence or being (*ein Akt, der im Vollzug sein eigenes Sein schafft*). The I understood as this self-positing act that gives rise to its own being and reality Fichte characterizes as "deed-act" (*Tathandlung*), also translated as "Act," and it is through this deed-act that what we take to be real or having being comes to the fore. Fichte arrives at his first principle of human knowledge on the basis of two assumptions. The first is the (actually quite traditional) assumption that we can be properly said to know only assertions (judgments or propositions) that exhibit the character of certainty (*Gewissheit*), or express what is actually and certainly the case; the second assumption (which borrows a Kantian term) maintains that a regress in the process of justification of such assertions can be avoided only if we can furnish some principle or fundamental proposition that is "utterly unconditioned" (*schlechthin unbedingt*) (as Fichte puts it), one, that is, which cannot be derived from any other principle, and which, for its part, is such that it alone guarantees the utter certainty, and thus the indubitability, that is, the immunity to skeptical objections, of any given proposition. This second assumption leads him to the claim that the unquestionable certainty of a proposition can never be demonstrated discursively (by appeal to purely conceptual considerations) or intuitively (by appeal to any sensuous perception); on the contrary, the ground of unconditional certainty can only be found in the constitution of self-consciousness itself. Fichte identifies as an appropriate method for deriving the principle in question a procedure that he calls "abstractive reflection." This kind of reflection, according to Fichte, takes its point of departure from a proposition that everyone regards as unquestionably certain, a so-called "fact of empirical consciousness." From this fact, this indubitable proposition, the process of reflection isolates or abstracts the elements that belong to the content of such a proposition, that is, belong to that about which the proposition asserts something. What is supposedly left, after this abstraction, is simply the form of the proposition, which consists precisely in affirming the ascription, or non-ascription, of a predicate to a

subject. The proposition that Fichte selects as the point of departure for his "abstractive reflection" is the logical law of identity in the form "$A = A$," a law that is rightly regarded as utterly certain, that is, certain without recourse to any further grounds, and thus as intrinsically certain. This fact alone already shows that we have the capacity (the faculty) to claim something as certain without reference to any further grounds, or, in Fichte's own terminology, of "positing" something absolutely (*etwas schlechthin zu setzen*). Reflection on this fact shows, according to Fichte, that the utter certainty of the law of identity is grounded in a self-positing activity or an I-activity, which in this case posits identity between *A* and *A*, an activity that consists precisely in the act of positing being, in this case of identity. However, as the result of an I-activity identity could not have being, could not be a real relation that indeed binds together *A* and *A*, that is, binds together *A* with itself, if the I-activity itself were not itself real. Because there is no other positing activity available than the I-activity, in order to be real this activity has to posit itself as real. Thus, in order to account for the utter certainty of the law of identity the I-activity, best expressed in the formula "I am," has to be seen as positing its own being.

This result, however, is not yet sufficient to give us the first unconditioned and fundamental principle of all knowledge in the form of the I-activity "I am." This is because we have arrived at the "I am" as the guarantor of the absolute certainty of a proposition only on the basis of an empirical fact, namely the proposition "*A* is *A*" that has been presupposed as utterly certain. Fichte now rightly observes that the "I am," as the condition of the certainty of an empirical fact, itself merely possesses the status of an empirical fact (*Tatsache*)—if the utterly certain proposition were not given, one would never be able to affirm the utter certainty of the "I am." Up to this point the "I am" has "only been grounded on a fact, and possesses no other validity than that attaching to a fact" (*GA* I, 2: 257). But in order to discover the first utterly unconditioned principle of all knowledge, we must establish not only the utter certainty of the law of identity, but also the unconditional certainty of the "I am" in a way that does not depend upon the presence of a fact at all. In other words: we must be able to answer the question, how the utterly unconditioned certainty of the proposition "I am" is possible. Fichte's reflections on this question lead to his conception of the "I am" as a deed-act (*Tathandlung*). He reasons along the following lines: We know from our analysis of the conditions of certainty of the law of identity that the "I am" has the capacity to posit something absolutely in the I, that is, in performing the I-activity. But in order to be able to posit something absolutely in the I,

the "I am" itself must be posited. We have also already seen that the absolute positing of the I consists in the activity of positing being. If this is so, and if the "I am" is to depend on nothing else as its condition, we must think of the I as the product of its own positing activity, since it would otherwise be quite impossible to explain its being. Now this, in turn, is supposed to imply that we must think the I as an activity that posits its own existence insofar as it is active: the I

> is at the same time the actor and the product of the act; the actor, and that which the activity brings forth; act and deed are one and the same; and the "I am" is therefore the expression of an Act. (*GA* I, 2: 259)

For Fichte, a deed-act is not supposed to be a fact, that is, something that is simply already discovered as given, since the deed-act is logically and ontologically prior to any facts insofar as it ultimately constitutes (posits) everything that can be a fact for an I. The I, understood as deed-act, is supposed to be something absolutely posited precisely because it posits itself, and this self-positing constitutes its essence and guarantees its being, its reality. Again, as Fichte says: "That whose being (essence) merely consists in positing itself as being, is the I, as absolute subject" (*GA* I, 2: 259). This means, for Fichte, that the I, so understood, displays all the characteristics that make it an appropriate candidate for the first utterly unconditioned principle of all knowledge. Fichte tries out various formulations for expressing this first principle in a really adequate fashion. His most adequate formulation might be the one that he furnishes at the end of section 10 of the first paragraph of the *Doctrine of Science*: "The I originally posits its own being absolutely" (*GA* I, 2: 261). This insight that the I must be conceived as self-positing activity, an activity whose performance consists in its self-actualization, is meant to make any distinction between epistemological and metaphysical grounds for idealism obsolete, thus to transcend all traditional grounds for and forms of idealism.

The second principle postulates a necessary act of counter-positing (*Entgegensetzen*) to the self-positing activity of the I, resulting in what Fichte calls a Non-I, and the third focuses on an activity that gives rise to the concept of divisibility. Fichte attempts to justify the introduction of these two principles on systematic grounds, although these principles can only be described as unconditional in a qualified respect, by exploiting his own distinction between the form and the content of a proposition. According to Fichte, every proposition or judgment can be treated as either conditioned

or unconditioned in relation to its content, or to its form, or to both. If a proposition is unconditioned in either or both of these respects, then it can be described, in Fichte's terminology, as a fundamental principle (*Grundsatz*). While the second principle is meant to establish as a condition of cognition (!) the possibility of the reality of "otherness," of something that is not the I, the third principle shows how to mediate between the self-positing and the counter-positing acts of the I by reciprocal limitation, thereby introducing a subject–object opposition *within* the I that has been established by the I-activity. Both these principles are presented as codifications of two further unconditional acts of positing on the part of the I. According to Fichte, the I possesses, in addition to the capacity for self-positing that is captured in the first principle, the further capacity of positing a non-I freely and simply (without any further ground). That is to say, it has the ability, through what Fichte calls an "absolute act" (*absolute Handlung*), to posit something as non-I that is opposed to the I. Fichte's second principle codifies this act of "counter-positing." Finally, the I is further characterized by a third capacity, that of freely and simply positing the divisibility of the I and the non-I. The third principle specifically captures this notion of divisibility.

It is not difficult to grasp what Fichte is attempting to accomplish with the introduction of his second principle. It is supposed to do justice to our inexpungible everyday conviction that there is an external world independent of ourselves, the objects of which are outside of and distinguished from us, and to which we can relate in terms of knowledge and action alike. But for Fichte this conviction is justified not because an external world independent of ourselves compels us to understand it as characterized in such and such a way. On the contrary, it is justified because it belongs to the distinctive structure of the I to organize its world dichotomously through the subject–object distinction or the opposition of the I and the non-I. However, it is more difficult to grasp the significance that Fichte ascribes to the third principle of divisibility. The motivation for introducing it is obviously to present the non-I not only as the negation of the reality that the I claims to posit in positing its own being, but also to ascribe independent reality, independent being, to the non-I. In attempting to accomplish this by recourse to the concept of divisibility, Fichte appears to make the implicit presupposition that being or reality should be regarded as a kind of quantity, something given in degrees (intensively considered) or parts (extensively considered). If we accept this presupposition, then we cannot avoid something like Fichte's third principle. For the assumption that we have to

conceive of reality as a distributable plurality, together with the notion that there are real objects that possess an existence independent of the subject, means that it is necessary, within the Fichtean model of positing, to identify a factor sufficient to account for the distribution of reality between the I and the non-I. This factor is taken by Fichte to be divisibility. However, Fichte still maintains that the division of what is absolutely posited as real by the unconditioned I-activity into I and non-I is executed by the I-activity itself, it takes place "within the I." Thus in the resulting I–non-I constellation the opposition is not between the absolute self-positing I-activity and something totally divorced from this activity, in other words Kant's thing in itself. The opposition achieved by divisibility is the result of the distribution of the sum total of what is posited by the absolute I (and hence what encompasses all of reality) onto two different domains brought about by its positing and counter-positing acts, that is, the domain of the divisible I on the one hand and that of the divisible non-I on the other. They are distinguished by what could be called different attitudes toward each other. In the first realm the I-activity posits that in self-positing it posits itself as *determined* by what it has posited as a non-I. In the second it posits that in its non-I positing it posits itself as *determining* that which it has posited as a non-I. As is to be expected, Fichte will use the introduction of the divisible I and non-I distinction and the construction of this distinction in terms of the determined–determining relation to establish two different disciplines in philosophy. The first is theoretical philosophy. Here the way is reconstructed in which the divisible I is determined by the non-I and eventually arrives at representations (*Vorstellungen*). This reconstruction contains most of his epistemological teachings. The second discipline is practical philosophy, in which the concepts of striving and counter-striving (*Streben und Gegenstreben*), of feeling (*Gefühl*), and of drive (*Trieb*) play the main role. It is within this framework of an interplay of activities characteristic and constitutive of the I that Fichte tries to avoid the Kantian conception of the thing in itself. Objects in the shape of substantial things and subjects in the shape of cognizers are both manifestations of the I-activity or of the I am.

On the basis of these three principles and by reflecting on the purported interplay between self-positing and counter-positing, Fichte arrives at a portrait of reality in which all "ordinary" objects, like walls, trees, and people, and their "normal" interactions and dependencies, like physical, spatio-temporal, and causal relations of force, find a place. This portrait is claimed to be idealistic because it is the outcome of an insight into the dynamics of these fundamental and opposed positing acts that

are essentially mental in nature and because in the end these activities, according to Fichte, are, metaphysically speaking, all there is: "for the philosopher there is acting, and nothing but acting; because, as a philosopher, he thinks idealistically" (*Second Introduction*, section 7; *Werke* 1: 498). Idealism thus starts to become what could be called *from a traditional point of view* a "hybrid" position that intimately connects epistemological and ontological elements in explaining "the determinations of consciousness," that is, our common sense conception of reality as an object of cognition and agency, "out of the acting of the intellect [*Intelligenz*]" yet without thinking of the intellect as some sort of existing subject:

> For idealism the intellect is an acting and absolutely nothing else; one should not even call it something active because by this expression one points to something substantial which is the subject of this activity.
>
> (*First Introduction*, section 7, *Werke* 1: 440)

A consequence that Fichte explicitly draws from this understanding of idealism is that one can no longer think of realism as a position that is opposed to idealism. Rather

> realism, . . . i.e., the assumption that objects totally independently of us exist outside of us, is contained in idealism itself and becomes explained and deduced in it.
>
> (*Second Introduction*, footnote at end of section 1, *Werke* 1: 455)

Because in Fichte's philosophical world everything is based on the I as a pure activity, it is not surprising that his idealism was often called "subjective idealism," even though he would resist any identification of his view with Berkeley's substance–accident form of immaterialism. He avoids that conception by introducing what could be called an ontology of pure action.

Fichte's dynamic conception of idealism was adopted almost immediately by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, who in the first period of his philosophical career became next to Fichte the most outspoken defender of this hybrid variety of idealism. In doing so he transformed Fichte's I-centered approach to reality via an analysis of the conditions of cognition and agency into an idealistic version of a monistic ontology. In this he was followed by Hegel. Whereas Fichte had mainly struggled to find an adequate expression for his activity-based conception of a self-positing I and had referred to anything outside the I only as the non-I posited by the I itself, in

his early writings on the philosophy of nature Schelling tries to supplement Fichte's approach by giving a much fuller account of nature, understood as everything that appears to be independent of us, in terms of the I-constituting activities. Because of Schelling's elevation of nature to a central topic in his presentation of an idealistic worldview his position became characterized, although somewhat misleadingly, as "objective idealism." On his account, we have to think of reality as an original unity (*ursprüngliche Einheit*) or a primordial totality (*uranfängliche Ganzheit*) of opposites that is internally differentiated in such a way that every particular item within reality can be seen as a partial, incomplete, or one-sided expression, manifestation, or interpretation of the most basic dynamic opposition characteristic of the whole of reality. This view of reality, which in early Schelling is quite explicitly linked to Spinoza's one-substance ontology, obviously does not lead directly to idealism by itself: one could just as well give it a naturalistic reading. As we suggested earlier, the assumption of an underlying identity between knowledge and the known can lead either to idealism or to some form of materialism, depending on which of its terms—knowledge or the known—is used to characterize the other. In order to connect a monistic ontology in general to idealism in particular, one has to identify the activities at work in the constitution of the world-whole with mental or spiritual elements that are supposed to give conceptual structure to reality. This can be and was done by Schelling at different stages of his philosophical career in different ways. In the first edition (1797) of his book *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (*Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*), he set out to prove idealism by trying to show that "the system of Nature is at the same time the system of our mind" (*IP* 30; *SW* 1: 134). This claim is not meant to state a reciprocal relation of dependence between nature and mind and their characteristic features, that is, according to Schelling, matter and concept, thereby presupposing that nature and mind, matter and concept nevertheless have some reality independently of each other. He rather wants us to think of nature and mind, matter and concept as being identical in the sense of being the same: the one is the other and vice versa. The reason why we as finite minds have to differentiate between them at all lies in a double perspective that is forced on us by our natural predisposition when looking at reality to distinguish the "outside us" from the "in us" (cf. *IP* 39; *SW* 1: 138)—thus Schelling sees dualism as a psychological tendency but not a philosophically sustainable position. If this disposition and its conditions were understood in the right way, we would comprehend that, as he famously writes, "Nature should be made Mind visible, Mind the invisible

Nature" (*IP* 42; *SW* 1: 151) thereby making room for an idealistic conception of reality as World-Soul (*On the World-Soul* is also the title of a 1798 publication by Schelling).

As a systematic counterpart to the construction of the phenomena of nature out of different dynamic factors (forces, activities), in 1800 Schelling presented his *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Here he set out to demonstrate the development of mental phenomena out of these factors which he here calls the unconscious and the conscious activity starting with sensation (*Empfindung*) and intuition (*Anschauung*) until he arrives via acts of willing at the aesthetic activity manifested in works of art. He thinks of these transcendental idealistic demonstrations as a necessary complement to his philosophy of nature (cf. *SW* 3: 331f.) and describes their mutual relation thus:

> As the philosophy of nature brings idealism forth out of realism, in that it spiritualizes the laws of nature into laws of intelligence, or adds the formal to the material, so does transcendental philosophy bring realism out of idealism, *by materializing the laws of intelligence into laws of nature*, or adds the material to the form. (*SW* 3: 352)

On this conception both together, philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism, exhaust the entire scope of philosophy, which reveals itself in the end to be nothing but a "progressive history of self-consciousness [*fortgehende Geschichte des Selbstbewusstseins*]" (*SW* 3: 331).

This early approach to establishing an idealistic monism and thereby vindicating a Fichte-inspired dynamic version of ontological idealism was unstable: first it describes mind as emerging from nature, in what seems like a materialist program, but then nature as emerging from mind, in what seems like a paradigmatic idealist program. Schelling gave it up a couple of years later in the second edition of the *Ideas* and criticized his earlier view as providing a basis only for what he now calls "relative idealism" (*IP* 52; *SW* 1: 163). He replaced the earlier view with what he now named "absolute idealism" (*IP* 50; *SW* 1: 162). Both his criticism of his earlier World-Soul conception and his endorsement of absolute idealism are at least to a certain degree due to Hegel's discussion of Schelling's philosophy in his *Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (1801). Schelling's new conception, which underlies what came to be known as his "System of Identity" (*Identitätssystem*), takes reality to be a dynamic whole which he describes as the "undivorced" (*ungeschieden*) or undifferentiated unity of the

absolute-ideal or subjectivity and the absolute-real or objectivity in an "eternal act of cognition" (*IP* 47; *SW* 1: 157). This eternal act is all there is, it is "the absolute." It is disclosed in two fundamentally different forms, one of which is characterized by the prevalence of subjectivity whereas in the other form objectivity prevails. These two forms give rise to the distinction between an "ideal world" and "Nature" (*IP* 49; *SW* 1: 161). However, according to Schelling these forms have to be distinguished from the "eternal cognitive act" or the absolute from which the ideal world and Nature originate. This act is pure activity of knowing that creates its objects in the very act of cognition by giving them a form. Because reality is conceived thus as a dynamic self-organizing cognitive process that lies at the basis of even the most fundamental opposition between subject and object, Schelling now thinks of his ontological monism as an unequivocal version of idealism. He writes:

> If we therefore define philosophy as a whole according to that wherein it surveys and presents everything, namely the absolute act of cognition, of which even Nature is again only one side, the Idea of all ideas, then it is Idealism. Idealism is and remains, therefore, the whole of philosophy, and only under itself does the latter again comprehend idealism and realism, save that the first absolute Idealism is not to be confused with this other, which is of a merely relative kind. (*IP* 50; *SW* 1: 162)

In the end, then, after 1800 Schelling (arguably as well as Fichte in his post-Jena period) seems pushed toward a "non-dogmatic" idealism that combines ontological as well as epistemological idealism within a monistic framework. (The preceding sketch of Fichte and Schelling is based on Horstmann 2008a and 2017. For surveys of the development of Schelling's philosophy, see Bowie 1993 and Snow 1996, and the multi-author collections Norman and Welchman eds. 2004 and Ostaric ed. 2014.)

Although Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel too embraces a dynamical conception of idealism in the spirit of Fichte and Schelling, he departs from both of them by not relying on the self-positing activity of an I (the "of" understood as indicating both a genetivus subjectivus and objectivus, i.e., the I as that which does the positing and as that which is posited) or on some primordial subjectless cognitive act that brings about subject and object as the most basic features of reality. He thus tries to transcend any traditional form of idealism that identifies the fundamental level of reality exclusively with the subject or mind. Given his deep distrust of irreconcilable

dichotomies, of anything unmediated and one-sided, one cannot expect Hegel to be an advocate of any conception of idealism conceived of as an alternative to or in opposition against realism or materialism or whatever else. He thus shares with Fichte and Schelling the hostility against attempts to privilege idealism over and against realism (or something else) or the other way round, but avoids the suspicion of a reversion to traditional idealism better than either of his predecessors; in other words, he tries to avoid collapsing the underlying unity of thought and being into one of its terms or the other. In the case of Hegel, this hostility toward privileging idealism shows especially well in his criticism of reductive programs as well as of "bifurcating" (*entzweiend*) or separating positions in metaphysics and epistemology. A reductive program according to which either everything physical is reducible to something mental or everything mental can be reduced to something physical is in his eyes "ridiculous" (cf. *GW* 6: 290ff.). Hegel rejects a bifurcation or separation based on the claim that one has to distinguish between a world "for us" and a world "in itself," where the former is a subject-dependent and in this sense idealistic world while the latter is the "real" world, although it is essentially totally inaccessible by any subjective cognitive means. Thus he is really objecting to Kant's distinction between appearance and things in themselves understood as putting "the real" outside of our grasp; Hegel objects to this as a "subjective" idealism, although Kant himself had objected to Berkeley's getting rid of things in themselves (not Berkeley's term, of course) under a similar name (see Hegel's criticism of Kant in *Faith and Knowledge, GW* 4: 325ff.). Hegel's objections to and his contempt for both idealism and realism in their mutually exclusive forms are well documented in almost all of his writings throughout his philosophical career.

So what can Hegel mean when in the second edition of his *Science of Logic* (1831) he nevertheless claims that in the end "[e]very philosophy is essentially idealism or at least has it as its principle" (*GW* 21: 142)? He must now mean by idealism something other than traditional idealism and certainly something other than Kant's indeterminate ontological realism (supplemented by the outright mental realism of Kant's moral philosophy). Rather, Hegel must mean by idealism a philosophical outlook that is immune to the charge of grounding a philosophical system in a conception of reality that is committed to the acceptance of any irreconcilable oppositions or dualisms. Now, for Hegel the most fundamental opposition both from a systematic and a historical perspective is the opposition between thinking and being, or rather, in the preferred terms, between subject and object. Looked at from

a systematic perspective, this opposition is fundamental because of its apparent unavoidability at a descriptive level for an assessment of the ultimate characteristics of reality: after all, we want to be able to hold fast to the distinction between what is only (in) our (subjective) thought and what is (objectively) the case. Considered from a historical point of view it shows that—at least within the tradition of occidental philosophy—the opposition between thinking and being lies at the bottom of the most influential attempts to give a philosophical account of the essence of reality and its multifarious ways of appearing to us, although some of the most profound of all philosophers, such as Parmenides at the very beginning of the Western tradition and Spinoza at the beginning of modern philosophy instead emphasized the unity of thought and being. The more typical conviction of the fundamental and irreconcilable opposition between thinking and being finds expression in many different ways. These ways include the belief that there is being that is totally independent of or without any relation to thinking, or the conviction that thinking is somehow external to being in that being is just the self-standing provider of material on which a by itself contentless (*inhaltslos*) thinking imposes a certain conceptual form, or the assumption that even if there were no thinking there would be being and vice versa. However, according to Hegel it can be demonstrated that to think of thinking and being as fundamentally opposed in any of these ways leads to inconsistencies resulting in contradictions, antinomies, and other bewildering deficiencies. Hence a philosophical system, "idealistic" in Hegel's new sense, that is to overcome these deficiencies has to get rid of the underlying fundamental opposition and to show that thinking and being are not opposed but ultimately the same. This claim as to the sameness or the identity of thinking and being (subject and object) is the cornerstone of Hegel's metaphysical credo and together with some other assumptions leads relatively smoothly to a version of ontological monism as the only convincing shape of an idealistic system. If a justification of continuing to use the term "idealism" is required, perhaps it could go back to the original meaning of Plato's "Ideas" as the ultimate realities, more fundamental than either the physical objects paraded before the artificial lights in Plato's cave or the flickering shadows of them perceived by the captives in the cave, although Plato's underlying unity of thought and being must be unitary although in some sense also self-diversifying. (The literature on Hegel, even just on Hegel's metaphysics, is far too extensive to survey here. For a brief survey see Emundts and Horstmann 2002, for more detail, Fulda 2003 and Beiser 2005. For an exhaustive intellectual biography, see Pinkard 2000. For works

on Hegel's metaphysics and logic, see Henrich 1971; Pippin 1989 and Pippin 2019; Bristow 2007; Longuenesse 2007; and Emundts 2012. For a volume that explores Hegel's relations to British idealism and American pragmatism, see Stern 2009. On Hegel's rejection of dualism, see Guyer 2017.)

However, a closer look at how Hegel tries to realize a monistic idealism reveals that it proved difficult to establish a philosophical system based on the identity of thinking and being or subject and object. At the outset this project was to be realized within the boundaries of two conditions. The first was to present an argument in favor of the superiority of idealism that would not just make the endorsement of idealism a question of individual character or what a person wants to be, a move that Hegel thought to be characteristic of both Fichte's and Schelling's defenses of idealism. The second was to abandon the view that was, according to Hegel, also sometimes to be found in Fichte and Schelling, that one has to think of idealism as an alternative and in opposition to materialism, which they also called "dogmatism" or "realism." Not to meet these two conditions were in Hegel's eyes unacceptable shortcomings of any attempt to establish a convincing idealistic worldview. He expressed his dissatisfaction with attempts of this kind to establish idealism as the superior approach in philosophy quite early (*Faith and Knowledge*, 1802) by referring to them under the title "philosophy of reflection of subjectivity" (*Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität*). This kind of philosophy of reflection, although favoring subjectivity and hence giving priority to the conceptual and in this sense ideal contributions of the mind to what is called reality is, according to Hegel, still stuck in what he later came to call the "opposition of consciousness" (*Gegensatz des Bewusstseins*) (in both *Phenomenology* [1807] and the *Science of Logic* [1812, 1813, and 1816]). This kind of philosophy is committed to a mode of thinking that takes place within a framework in which the opposition of thinking and being or subject and object is still basic, dissolved only superficially by either abstracting from one of the opposed sides or by establishing a relation of domination between the opposed elements, without transcending and transforming them into a whole, his renowned "Subject-Object," a whole that is both constituted by these elements, the subject and the object, and that at the same time constitutes them as its own internal differentiations. This way of overcoming oppositions by thinking of the elements opposed as having significance only insofar as their mutual relation can be conceived of as being constituted by the unity they together form led Hegel to claim that in order to avoid the idea of self-standing or irreducible oppositions and hence to escape the charge of one-sidedness in cases

where the prioritization of opposites is at stake, one has to follow the methodological maxim that for every opposition there has to be a unity in place that consists of the elements opposed. Hegel took this principle to imply that the "absolute," the totality of what there is and can be, must be conceived of as what he sometimes calls the "identity of identity and non-identity" (this formulation is already found in *The Difference Between the Philosophies of Fichte and Schelling* of 1801, at the beginning of its chapter on Schelling) or as the "unity of unity and multiplicity" (from the essay on *Natural Law* of 1802, section II) where the terms "identity" in each of these formulations are meant to refer to both the whole that gives rise to what is opposed and to one of the elements in opposition.

But does the acceptance of such a methodological formula as a means by which to transcend oppositions actually suffice to establish a superior conception of idealism that is not just a one-sided alternative to materialism or realism or dogmatism? It appears that on the basis of this methodological device two intelligible answers to this question are available, neither of which, however, settles the question of superiority. The first answer leads to a negative result not only as to the alleged superiority of an idealism that surpasses one-sidedness but in particular as to the cogency of such an idealism. The second answer opens up at least the chance of a positive answer to the question of the persuasiveness of a non-oppositional idealism. On the one hand, those favoring the negative option would start from the claim that the very idea of a "Subject–Object," that is, of a whole that is prior to and constitutive of its elements, cannot be defended by any rational means. They would end up recommending just giving up on idealism as well as its opposites and to refrain from discussing them as positions whose superiority over each other can be defended philosophically in a subject–object framework, because there is no rational way to make sense of this framework altogether and hence to decide which of them has to be favored over the other. It is in fact a reaction Hegel himself sometimes advocates when he states, for example in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (chapter on later skeptics), that both idealism and dogmatism have the status of mere proclamations and thus turn out to be equipollent. This might be seen as a recommendation to give up on fundamental metaphysics altogether, which of course many subsequent philosophers might welcome. Supporters of the positive option, on the other hand, would have to give credit to the rationality of the strategy, sketched above, of how to overcome oppositions in a philosophically acceptable way and thus would allow for a "Subject–Object" as the common whole in which the opposed sides can be

united. But even such an admission would not lead directly to an argument for the superiority of idealism. It would only provide a reason for favoring a position that could be described as real-idealism (*Real-Idealismus*), a synthetic product that integrates idealism and its opposites into a unity whose elements, though still distinguishable, are at the same time in some sense identical or, in Hegel's idiom, sublated (*aufgehoben*). It is easy to show that most of the German idealists were strongly attracted by this positive solution. At some point in their philosophical careers both Fichte and Schelling explicitly used the term "real-idealism" in order to characterize their views. Even Hegel late in life, in a review of a treatise by Ohlert (*GW* 16: 287ff.), made use of this term as a name for his metaphysical teachings.

The positive solution just outlined seems to have been in line with Hegel's way of conceiving of how to overcome oppositions in his early Jena writings, such as the "Difference" text. Unsurprisingly, however, he became dissatisfied with such a tactic because of its inherent limitations. This dissatisfaction shows up explicitly for the first time in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Hegel's first and perhaps still most widely read extended philosophical book. From then on he tried in different ways to find a justification of idealism *in sensu stricto*, that is, a justification of a view that (1) attributes priority to non-sensible activities, especially to the activity of thinking, that (2) makes the traditional alternatives of materialism, realism, and/or dogmatism obsolete, and that (3) allows for subject–object identity without thereby being committed to real-idealism. The reasons for his dissatisfaction with attempts that lead to real-idealism, among them most of his own pre-phenomenological systematic sketches, are quite simple. (Here "phenomenological" connotes Hegel's 1807 view that the different, inadequate conceptions of reality appear in successive form in human history until an adequate conception is finally reached, not Edmund Husserl's early twentieth-century conception of a "bracketed" *Wesenschau* or "inspection of essences" that reveals the timeless structure of objective experience and thought.) In the first place, it is obvious that the attempt to transcend oppositions by making the opposed elements parts of an integrating unity looks like a makeshift, a terminological stipulation that cannot do justice to what it is meant to achieve, namely, to allow the opposed elements to develop out of a unity that is prior to them. Instead of commencing with a developing unity, this move, according to Hegel, remains damaged by presupposing the opposed components as self-standing, thereby making the unity dependent on the elements rather than the other way around. Secondly, the unity presented as resulting from a process of integration of

what is taken to be opposed cannot be conceived as representing a real identity of opposites because of its status as a synthetic product. In order to qualify as real unities to Hegel's taste, unities could be pictured in analogy to the "*Kippfiguren*" of *Gestalt* psychology, single figures such as the duck-rabbit or the vase-or-two-facing-profiles that can be seen in either of two ways without any physical change in them, and that even flip back and forth between two appearances without our choice. Both these reasons (together with a couple of more idiosyncratic ones) led Hegel to believe that the method of overcoming oppositions by stipulating unities is not ultimately feasible for the task at hand, hence not able to solve the problem of one-sidedness and consequently of no use in the endeavor of justifying the superiority of idealism as he was trying to redefine it.

The question, then, is how to proceed in order to establish a version of the subject–object-identity idea that is neither subject to the charge of one-sidedness nor to that of just postulating it without any argument as a given fact? Although this might seem to be a purely technical task, that is, the task of conceptualizing the subject–object identity in a different way than had been done in the real-idealism approach, and although Hegel recognized early the insufficiencies of Fichte's, Schelling's, and even his own initial suggestions for overcoming oppositions, it took him quite a while to come up with a proposal that both avoids the problem of one-sidedness and the suspicion that it operates with unfounded assumptions while at the same time supporting the superiority of idealism as a metaphysical doctrine. This is so because he had to realize that there is not just an ontological question about the nature of the subject–object identity, but that there is an epistemological worry to be answered before the ontological question can even be addressed. As became increasingly clear to him, the task he had to face consists in demonstrating two things: (1) that it is *epistemologically* warranted to claim that there are indeed unities of basic oppositions (like subject–object, identity–nonidentity, unity–multiplicity, thinking–being) that precede their constitutive elements in that they are at the basis of their constitution while at the same time consisting of them, and (2) that it is *ontologically* necessary to think of the most basic identity, which is that of subject and object, in an idealistic fashion, that is, not in terms of a substantial item but within the scope of a framework that relies on the activity of thinking as a process that is manifested in concepts and their (logical) relations. For Hegel it is the *epistemological* task that must be solved first before the *ontological* task of giving an idealistic account of the subject–object identity in terms of the activity of thinking can be tackled. At least in

the *Phenomenology* his idealism is based on epistemology in order to ground metaphysics; that is why Hegel thought that he had to precede his "science of logic," which is essentially his ontology, with his "phenomenology," which is essentially his epistemology (see Fulda 1965).

The first task mentioned amounts to establishing an epistemological argument for metaphysical idealism. Hegel presents this argument under the guise of an introduction to what he calls "science" in the shape of a *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Science here is roughly identical in meaning with metaphysics. The details of this epistemological introduction to metaphysics have been extensively investigated by many different scholars in studies specifically on the *Phenomenology*, including Pinkard 1994, Stern 2002, and most recently Brandom 2019. Hegel starts his epistemological account by addressing the question: how is it possible to convince what he calls in the *Phenomenology* a "natural consciousness" (*natürliches Bewusstsein*), that is, an ordinary human being who is committed to the common standards of conceptualization and reasoning—how is it possible to convince such a subject *by discursive means*, not just by appeal to some strange non-standard procedures like intellectual intuition or revelation, of the epistemic legitimacy of the assumption of a subject–object identity that is prior to and constitutive of its elements? Because the answer to this epistemological question is meant to ground the ontological claim concerning the ultimate constitution of reality, Hegel thought fit to address it in the form of an introduction to what subsequently had to be elaborated in a systematic way as a metaphysical doctrine about what there ultimately is (his "logic"). This epistemological task turned out to be much more difficult than Hegel initially thought. This is documented by the surprisingly many different sketches of what he took to be an "introduction" to his system that he wrote even before he published the best-known version of this introduction, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1807. But the *Phenomenology* is not just the best known, it is the only version of an introduction that Hegel ever elaborated in detail, at least in print, that explicitly addressed the task at hand as an epistemological problem. In the second edition of the exposition proper of his system, the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline* published much later in 1827 (first edition 1817) he chose a different introductory path to his metaphysical project under the title "Attitudes of Thought towards Objectivity" (*Stellungen des Gedankens zur Objektivität*) for reasons that might have to do with a modification in his assessment as to the suitability of epistemological considerations for introductory purposes. This will be pointed out later. However, the *Phenomenology* still remains the

most straightforward attempt to settle the question as to the metaphysical priority of the subject–object identity on epistemological grounds.

Although looking at Hegel's different pre-phenomenological attempts to find a suitable introduction to his central ontological doctrine is an interesting enterprise in its own right, it cannot be dealt with here in detail. It would lead to a discussion of why Hegel initially, from 1801 perhaps to 1806, thought of what he in this early period called "logic" as a discipline that could function as an introduction to his metaphysics. Of all the fragments that have come down to us from this period, the most complete "logical" version of an introduction is the so-called *Jena Systemdraft II* from 1804–5. This system-draft contains a so-called *Logic* as a discipline that is meant to present the process of "elevating" (*erheben*) an epistemic subject equipped with traditionally accepted methodological and logical convictions to the "standpoint of science" (*Standpunkt der Wissenschaft*), that is, to a standpoint that is based on the metaphysical doctrine of subject–object identity. This process is delineated by Hegel as an introductory logical process that proceeds by means of a criticism of standard logical forms like judgments and inferences as well as of object constituting concepts. This general approach is of course inspired by Kant's strategy of a "metaphysical deduction" of the categories of pure understanding, although Hegel's eventual execution of this strategy in the *Science of Logic*, by far his longest philosophical book, will be far more ambitious than Kant's few pages, offered as a mere "clue" to the transcendental deduction of the categories.

In order to deal with the epistemological problem of demonstrating the metaphysical priority of identities over and against their opposed elements, in the *Phenomenology* Hegel begins with an analysis of the conditions of knowledge where knowledge is understood as an achievement of a subject's activity of dealing conceptually with the objective world or the world of objects. For Hegel, an inquiry into the conditions of knowledge is the right starting point because knowledge understood as the activity of gaining conceptual access to the world is the only *discursive* attitude available to a subject toward determining what is objectively real, that is, toward the world. The approach Hegel is pursuing in order to arrive at the desired result, that is, the proof of the priority of unity or identity, can be outlined thus: he first introduces the conception of knowledge (*Erkennen*) that is leading his investigation. According to this conception knowledge is a relation established between some claim of a subject and an object that allows for some sort of correspondence (*Entsprechung*) between them. The possibility of this correspondence depends on getting hold of structural

features that are shared by the subject's claim and the object on the basis of which a knowledge relation can be established. Hegel maintains that the relevant structural feature in the case of knowledge is conceptual presence of both subject (claim) and object which implies that not only the claim but also its object must be treated as conceptual items. This is the assumption of isomorphism that underlies any epistemologically motivated move toward idealism; the fundamental difference between Hegel's strategy and Kant's is that for Kant this approach requires the reduction of objects of genuine knowledge to appearances, or our own way of representing objects, while Hegel is trying to avoid this reduction by conceiving of real objects that are structured in the same way as our thoughts are without being reduced to them.

Hegel's concept of knowledge as a correspondence relation between subject and object has to be distinguished from the process by which knowledge is established. The exemplary scenario that Hegel has in mind when talking about the acquisition of knowledge in the *Phenomenology* might be described as follows: knowledge obtains if a (conscious) subject affirms a claim about the characteristics (whether essential or not) of an object, state of affairs, or event (henceforth just "object," thus this should not be understood just to mean that which endures through some state of affairs or event) that corresponds to what the subject takes to be true of the object, state of affairs, or event that is addressed. For example, if a subject claims that such and such is the case then this claim amounts to knowledge if it turns out that such and such really is the case. (Thus far, Hegel's analysis does not seem much different than Alfred Tarski's famous correspondence analysis of truth, "'*p*' is true only if *p*"; Tarski 1936 and 1944.) Knowledge is thus understood as the positive result of a comparison between what a subject takes to be true and what is true of the object. It is easy to decide what a subject takes to be true. This is expressed by the claim. What is not that easy to decide is whether this claim *is* true, that is, whether the object is indeed adequately characterized by the claim. (This is why Tarski's definition of truth is not an epistemology of truth.) It is here that according to Hegel experience comes into play. In order to come to a decision as to the adequacy of its claim to the object, a subject has to rely on experience. (Thus far, of course, any empiricist, and Kant as well, would say the same.) If a subject experiences that its way of conceiving and referring to what it takes to be the case is deficient and is somehow refuted, undermined, or made obsolete by the way the object presents itself in experience, it has to give up the knowledge-claim and to replace it by a different claim. Experience

understood as a means of settling knowledge-claims in this fashion plays a double role, a negative and a positive one. Its negative role consists in its destructive function with regard to the knowledge-claims of the subject: according to Hegel it often happens that the subject, based on what it experiences while referring to an object, has to give up on its claims because they prove not to measure up to the intended object. (Thus far there is still no difference with ordinary empiricism.) Yet for Hegel there is a much more significant positive aspect connected with experience, and here is where Hegel departs from ordinary empiricism: while experiencing the breakdown of its claim, the subject does learn something genuinely valid about the nature of the object addressed. This is so because the subject can only experience the inadequacy of its claim against the background of what the object referred to reveals as (belonging to) its true nature, a revelation—and this is Hegel's decisive point—that is manifested in its not corresponding to what a subject claims about it. In other words, the object shows its real character to a subject only by exhibiting what it is not conforming to, and hence gives rise to a new claim by the subject that takes into account what was learned about the object in the experiential process. It is in this manner that the subject learns more and more about the real nature of the object until it arrives at a subject–object constellation where it realizes that knowledge can only be obtained if it understands *itself* as being—identical with or indistinguishable from—the object. The details of this experiential process are somewhat complicated and cannot be spelled out here. It must suffice to indicate that for Hegel the main methodological feature at work in initiating this process consists in what he calls "determinate negation," an operation that is designed to introduce new conceptual elements into the process and to lead within the chain of experiences a subject makes of its object from one subject–object constellation to the next.

The question now is, how does Hegel avoid lapsing into ordinary idealism, the reduction of the object to the subject? Two points might be suggested. (1) Hegel's analysis of the conditions of knowledge does not just lead to a metaphysical claim about the "real" nature of objects. His analysis is meant to pave the way at the same time to what could be called an idealistic "metaphysics of the subject." This is so because according to Hegel the experiential process reveals besides the real nature of the object the real nature of the subject as well, although that is often just taken for granted in empiricism. In this process the subject is forced to realize through experience that what ultimately can count as an object that meets the standards for knowledge is a self-transparent, organized, conceptual whole that

encompasses all of reality, which empiricism would never allow. However, it also has to realize that this all-inclusive conceptual organism is identical with itself, to which empiricism is also not committed. This leads to the subject's experience of its own reality via its insight into the true nature of the object, thereby proving metaphysical subject–object identity, although it achieves this insight/knowledge not in its initial shape as an individual human cognizer (*Erkennender/Wissender*) but in its social, cultural, and religious shape as Spirit.

(2) Hegel's concept of knowledge is designed to establish a metaphysical conclusion based on an epistemological argument. In this regard it can be seen as having structural similarities to Kant's epistemological argument in favor of transcendental idealism. According to Kant the possibility of knowledge depends on the ability of a subject to perform object-constituting acts through conceptual operations on intuitions that are guided by categorical rules. Kant's argument, as he emphasizes over and over, entails that what can count as an object of knowledge has the status of an appearance and not of a thing in itself, that is, an object considered independently of the sensible and conceptual activities of the knowing subject, because it is the result of the sensible forms and conceptual procedures of the knowing subject. This is the reason why Kant restricts knowledge to knowledge of appearances and why he takes the metaphysical question as to the real nature of objects, independent of space, time, and the categories, to be unresolvable. Hegel in the *Phenomenology* initially proceeds in the same transcendental spirit as Kant. He too thinks of objects of knowledge as conceptually constituted by the subject and he too believes that human knowers deal with appearances as the objects of knowledge. However, and here is what he takes to be his fundamental difference with Kant, he refuses to take appearances, which Kant understood as intuitional and conceptual constructs created by the human mind, to be the ultimate reference point of knowledge-claims, end products of our creative cognitive activities that give no information whatsoever about the real nature of that of which they are appearances. Instead, Hegel favors a model according to which appearances are the ways in which something real appears, they are one-sided manifestations of something real, of something in which they are grounded. In his eyes this model is not just superior to Kant's conception because it can avoid the subjectivism inherent in Kant's approach to knowledge; it is better because it does justice to the way in which knowledge is actually acquired by experience—the phenomenology of knowledge. It is because there is something "out there" as (part of) an objective reality, about which we

believe ourselves to have a conception expressed by a knowledge-claim, that we are able to experience the deficiencies of this conception and to replace it by a different one. The object, the "out there," has to be something independent from the way it appears to us because otherwise there would be nothing that could function as the source of resistance on the basis of which we are driven to give up on an initial knowledge-claim and its underlying conception of an object while at the same time being compelled to formulate a different, more adequate claim on the other. Yet this source of resistance, the object "out there," is for Hegel also a thoroughly conceptual item. It reveals its nature by disclosing those conceptual determinations that are characteristic of each of the multiple ways in which it appears until the subject arrives via what it experiences at an adequate concept of that which is grounding all of its appearances, that is, at the object in itself. Kant is sometimes credited with having established a "metaphysics of experience" (Paton 1936). In a certain sense the same can be said about Hegel's position in the *Phenomenology*. However, whereas Kant thinks of experience as the outcome of our epistemic dealings with and restricted to appearances, Hegel conceives of experience as an epistemic process that leads to an insight into the thing in itself. This is a radical reconception of Kant's conception of the thing in itself, which, we will later suggest, shows that what would subsequently be called "Neo-Kantianism" and heralded as a departure from Hegel nevertheless preserved one of his essential innovations. Charles Sanders Peirce's "pragmatism" also shows the influence of Hegel in its conception of truth as that which would be believed at the (ideal) completion of scientific inquiry.

With the concept and the process of knowledge settled, Hegel starts his epistemological argument for the metaphysical priority of identities over and against their opposed elements with an analysis of the way in which the most basic opposition, the opposition between a subject and an object of knowledge, is initially presented. This leads to a configuration in which knowledge figures as a relation between subject and object that proceeds on the assumption that the relata of this relation, that is, the subject and the object, stand in complete opposition to each other, each of them being self-standing and a pure other to the other. This configuration is what Hegel calls "sense certainty," a configuration in which the knowledge relation is supposed to obtain between two items, a subject-this and an object-this, that are totally isolated from each other, with no conceptualizable internal connection whatsoever. According to Hegel, such a conception of the knowledge relation proves to be unwarranted because the idea of a cognitive relation

between totally independent items makes no sense. Instead, that the very attempt to establish such an (unreasonable) conception already presupposes that there indeed is a structural affinity between subject and object, an affinity that enables an object to be an object for a subject and that enables the subject to relate to the object. Hegel wants us to think of this mutual affinity in terms of conceptual determinations necessary to come up with both the concept of an object of knowledge and a tenable account of a knowing subject. Thus in the case of, for example, "sense certainty" the affinity claim is expressed in the result that in order to be an epistemic object an object of cognition has to exhibit the *conceptual* characteristics of universality (*Allgemeinheit*) and singularity (*Einzelnheit*) provided by the subject and that the subject itself, in order to be thought of as an epistemic subject, must have at its disposal the conceptual resources (in this case the concepts of universality and singularity) necessary to determine the conceptual features of *its* object. The entire process run through in the *Phenomenology* is meant to enrich the features a subject and an object have to share in order to arrive at a complete concept of what both a subject and an object are. This is Hegel's version of the age-old assumption that knowledge and the known must be isomorphic.

Thus, in the *Phenomenology* the initial scenario of "sense certainty" that is based on the absolute opposition between the knowing subject and the object known sets the stage for a long series of configurations or models of knowledge that is aimed at demonstrating that knowledge in a complete or absolute sense can only take place in a setting where subject and object share *all* their respective structural features, that is, where both, the subject and the object, have the same conceptual determinations and thus are identical. This amounts according to Hegel to the insight that if knowledge is analyzed in terms of a subject–object relation then in the end there is *for knowledge* (*Erkennen*) no difference between the subject and the object or, as he is fond of saying, that there is a difference that is no difference (*ein Unterschied, der keiner ist*). Among other things this means for Hegel that knowledge in the strict sense is ultimately self-knowledge or a state of affairs where a subject that stands in the relation of knowing (*erkennen*) to an object is "in truth" related to itself. As he famously puts it, in the act of knowing (*Erkenntnisakt*) the subject "is in the other (the object) with itself (exclusively related to itself)" (*im Anderen bei sich selbst sein*).

However, the demonstration that the difference between subject and object of knowledge is based on their original identity does not seem to lead directly to the justification of a metaphysical claim about the real nature

of things. This is so because of the impression that the identity arrived at in the *Phenomenology* does not seem that much different in status from the identity Hegel was so critical of in the case of Fichte and Schelling. Hegel's phenomenological conception of identity could well be seen to boil down to a form of subjective idealism because in the end he too, like Fichte and Schelling, conceives of identity as the result of the epistemic activities of a subject, thereby making objectivity again subject-dependent or resolving it into a Kantian subjective creation. In order to count as giving an epistemological *argument* in favor of a metaphysical claim about the real nature of things, the *Phenomenology* needs to provide some reason why the epistemic process that leads to subject–object identity is a process that implies the metaphysical reality of the items involved and not just their epistemic reality as subjective conceptual constructions. For Hegel this reason consists in the experience of resistance. This is so because resistance can only be exerted by something real and experienced by something that is susceptible to resistance, hence also has to be real. Experience and resistance thus guarantee the transition from epistemology to metaphysics: the object referred to has to be real in a subject-independent, that is, metaphysical sense because the characteristics it displays are discovered, and not created, by the subject in the process of establishing a correspondence relation between the conception it has of the object, expressed by a knowledge-claim, and the way it experiences the object to be. The upshot is that the subject as well as the object of this process are neither posits as in Fichte nor based in some unknowable unity of opposites as in Schelling; they are experienced as metaphysically real items within a knowable world in which their opposition turns out to be just an appearance.

Thus the epistemological account presented in the *Phenomenology* of how the very possibility of discursive, conceptual knowledge is based in an original identity of opposites or a metaphysical subject–object identity can be seen as an argument to an ontological conclusion because of the conviction Hegel shares with the other post-Kantian idealists that knowledge is a real relation. By this he and his idealist allies mean that knowledge somehow presupposes the reality of what is known, that is, it is a relation between real relata. This conviction puts constraints on how to conceive of this identity when it comes to a metaphysical interpretation of its elements (analogous to the way in which in propositional logic a semantics puts constraints on the interpretation of its syntax). This identity established as the basis of knowledge has to meet at least two conditions. First, it has to be such that the subject–object split can be grounded in it, and second it must allow for an

interpretation according to which it is metaphysically real or has being (*Sein*). These conditions function as constraints on how to conceive of subject–object identity because they specify what can count as an acceptable interpretation (a semantics) of an otherwise purely structural item (a syntactic feature). Without meeting these two conditions, all we would have at the end of the *Phenomenology* would be a claim about the grounding function of an identity of subject–object structure (a syntactic item) that is still lacking an interpretation of the reality (the semantic element) of all the terms involved in that structure. It is by providing an interpretation of the identity structure along the lines delineated that in the *Phenomenology* Hegel tries to give a defense of metaphysical idealism in a non-oppositional sense, that is, not reducing being to thought, by using epistemological means.

However, in later years, as was already mentioned, he gave up on an epistemological introduction to his metaphysics and replaced it by what could almost count as a reversal of his phenomenological strategy. He now tries to establish a metaphysical argument for non-oppositional idealism that has epistemological consequences. This change of attitude is documented most visibly in the second edition of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in General* (1827), although it might have been on Hegel's mind much earlier. Here the introductory function is taken over by a text entitled "Preliminary Conception" (*Vorbegriff*) set in front of the three subdivisions of (the encyclopedic version) of "The Science of Logic" (*Wissenschaft der Logik*). This text contains what he now calls "[Three] Attitudes of Thought towards Objectivity" (*[Drei] Stellungen des Gedankens zur Objektivität*). In it Hegel puts forward his views of the shortcomings (and merits) of traditional answers to questions about the real nature of things and points to the limitations of the methods of traditional philosophy for tackling these questions. The reasons for his shift away from assigning the *Phenomenology* an introductory role remain somewhat in the dark and are nowhere made explicit by him. It almost certainly had nothing to do with him having reservations as to the philosophical soundness of what he had expounded in the earlier book, for he continues to make his positive references to this work throughout his later writings. A reasonable guess could be that Hegel became increasingly worried that the phenomenological talk about subject and object and their identity might have encouraged the temptation to think of them as substantial items, as some sort of essentially stable things instead of acknowledging them as thing-like appearances in the ever changing configurations in which knowledge (*Erkennen*) or more generally thinking

as an activity organizes itself. After all, what shows up as "absolute knowing" (*absolutes Wissen*) at the end of the *Phenomenology* is meant to designate a situation in which knowledge as the activity of thinking in its spiritual appearance or as Spirit realizes that there is nothing but this activity and that whatever there is, be it subject or object in any of their many guises, is an outcome, a manifestation of this very activity, as is Spirit itself. Hegel's cryptic note written down late in life on the occasion of his abandoning the plan to revise his *Phenomenology* for a second edition could be read as pointing in this direction. The "abstract absolute" (*abstracte Absolute*), he somewhat apologetically writes, did prevail in the era in which he wrote down the *Phenomenology*. This could be read as a reminder of the risks connected with talk about the absolute in terms of subject–object identity in the dynamical, activity-based metaphysical framework of absolute knowing, a framework that he finds paradigmatically conceived of already by Aristotle in his conception of *noesis noeseos* ("thinking that thinks itself") as he openly admits in many places, especially at the end of the *Encyclopedia*.

So now Hegel returns firmly to the camp of post-Kantian idealism, grounding any conception of reality as mental substance in a more fundamental conception of activity. This activity may seem obviously mental, but Hegel tries to avoid identifying it with the activity of any particular subject, which would collapse his view back into traditional, "subjective" idealism. Rather, beginning with the *Science of Logic*, the first part of which was originally published in 1812, five years after the publication of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel starts his philosophical project of establishing a non-oppositional metaphysical idealism with an abstract metaphysical claim to the sole reality of thinking, and declares that the sole condition for making this claim convincing to a human subject consists in the willingness of a person to make "the resolve . . . to consider thinking as such" (*Entschluss, das Denken als solches zu betrachten*) (*SoL*, trans. Di Giovanni, 70, cf. *Enc*. §17, §78 A). Thinking here is understood as a conceptual activity that manifests its reality in knowledge (*Wissen, Erkennen*), thus it is conceived of by Hegel as an activity that in taking place gives rise to and displays itself in all the conceptual determinations and operations necessary for establishing concepts on the basis of which a knowledge relation between a subject and its intended object can be established. In other words, the *Science of Logic* is meant to provide an account of how the conceptual tools and procedures necessary for knowledge are grounded in and develop out of the very activity of thinking in general. It is a metaphysical account because it refers to what is ultimately real: according to Hegel there is nothing else

than the subject-independent activity of thinking that is real and whatever it is that can count as real has to be grasped as a manifestation of this activity. Because it is a conceptual activity the concepts it generates and the procedural configurations (like judgments and inferences) in which it manifests itself exhaust the domain of what can play a role in the establishment of an environment containing all of the conceptual elements that can function as necessary conditions for the possibility of a knowledge relation between subject and object. This means that what can count as knowledge has to be constituted in conformity with the conceptual and logical rules that express the very nature of thinking. Anything that does not comply with these rules forfeits any claim to the status of being real or has no claim to reality. This is so because it falls outside of what can be thought by thinking.

At first glance, it seems strange that Hegel elaborates his *metaphysical* views as to the reality of thinking understood as a conceptual activity that is shaped by inherent logical rules in a discipline he calls *Science of Logic.* After all, logic in the philosophical tradition since the ancient Greeks was sharply distinguished from metaphysics. Although the subject matter of both logic and metaphysics could be taken to be thinking (as Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, and many others do) these disciplines were meant to deal with thinking in different ways. Logic was assigned the task of analyzing independently of all content the forms in which thinking appears, for example, to use the eighteenth-century textbook taxonomy, analyzing the forms of concepts, judgments, and inferences. Metaphysics, in contrast, was supposed to answer questions about the ultimate nature of reality as opposed to thought, although on the basis of what can be coherently and validly thought (cf. *Enc.* §26ff.). However, Hegel's junction of logic and metaphysics is not surprising if one takes into account that for him, contrary to the tradition, thinking attains a metaphysical status based on the claim of the reality of thinking. Thus, for him there is no difference between logic and metaphysics and hence the title *Science of Logic* is appropriate. Hegel's logic is not just a successor or replacement of traditional logic, but is already metaphysics—if you like, it elides Kant's distinction between "general" and "transcendental logic," where the former concerned solely the valid forms of relationship among concepts, judgments, and inferences but the latter concerns how such relationships can gain a purchase on objects. Hegel is quite explicit about this change of status in all the different versions that he published under the title *Science of Logic*. In his metaphysical logic thinking comes to realize its nature by entering a highly complex autopoietic or self-organizing process. This process is outlined by Hegel in two successive stages each of

which is tackled in a separate part of the *Science of Logic*. The first part he calls "objective logic" containing a "logic of being" and a "logic of essence," the second is called "subjective logic" and contains a "logic of the Concept." The metaphysical process starts from the most basic objective manifestations of thinking that give rise to qualitative, quantitative, and relational determinations in a variety of forms. They are followed by subjective manifestations that show up in the shape of the logical and methodological rules that govern inferences and scientific explanations until a stage is reached in which thinking arrives at self-transparency, understanding itself as the originator of both all the objective and subjective determinations so far. This understanding confirms to thinking that it indeed is all of reality, that is, all that there is, or that thinking and being are the same. According to Hegel, it also confirms to thinking that the subject–object divide has no metaphysical reality but is just a way in which thinking internally divides itself in order to account for the possibility of knowledge which thus turns out to be self-knowledge. It is precisely here that Hegel collapses Kant's distinction between general and transcendental logic. As is only to be expected, Hegel's logico-metaphysical identification has been and still is debated by both sympathizers with and opponents of his philosophical project, especially in the English-speaking world. This ambivalent attitude toward his metaphysical teachings might have been a reason why people attracted to Hegel's work have often been more interested in the epistemological side of his enterprise, thus in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, than in its logico-metaphysical side. In recent years, however, a re-evaluation of his metaphysics seems to have taken place, as is documented in an increasing number of texts on logico-metaphysical topics (e.g., Stern 2009; Kreines 2015; Pippin 2019).

Putting the point without Hegel's terminology but relying heavily on his own preliminary remarks on the question "With What must the Beginning of Science be made?" in the *Science of Logic*, the relation between his metaphysical and his epistemological line of thought can be sketched roughly thus: The *Phenomenology* has given an epistemological argument that knowledge understood as the conceptual activity of a subject that relates to an object can only be realized if it can be seen as having established a relation of correspondence between real items. It also has demonstrated that in order for these items to stand in such a relation they have to be structurally identical. Thus, realized or "real" knowledge (*wahres Wissen*), that is, knowledge where the items related to each other do correspond and are indeed identical, has to be taken as a relation between conceptual items.

However, relations between conceptual items can only be established by thinking because thinking is the only conceptual activity. Hence if knowledge is to be possible thinking must be real, must have being (*Sein haben*).

It is here where the metaphysical considerations begin. Thinking is an *objective*, a *real* activity in the sense of being metaphysically independent of any subject whatsoever. As is shown in the *Science of Logic*, it manifests itself in conceptual determinations that are constitutive of the possibility of knowledge. These determinations do not just include concepts that are essential for establishing the very concept of an object (of knowledge). They also include conceptual determinations without which there could be no conception of a subject (of knowledge) and especially not a conception of the identity of subject and object. Because thinking is a conceptual activity its reality implies that in unfolding its determinations it thereby constitutes the concepts of subject and object that have to be conceived of as conceptual structures whose reality consists in nothing other than their *being* instantiations of thought, that is, manifestations of thinking, ways in which thinking is revealed. In short, objects and subjects just *are* what Hegel calls "objective thoughts," they are *not* objects *of* thought, not something that can be distinguished from what they are manifestations of, that is, of thinking. Conceived in this way, thinking not only fulfills the two conditions mentioned above (i.e., it grounds the subject–object divide and it is real, has being), it is at the same time the *only* candidate to satisfy them (because there is no other conceptual activity available). Therefore, in order to account for a model of reality that is open to knowledge-claims, that is, that conceives of reality as intrinsically cognizable, one has to start from the identity of thinking and being or from the fact that only thinking is real.

From this argument for the sole reality of thinking, whether in its epistemological or its metaphysical form, it is easy to derive a new conception of idealism that is not subject to the objections that Hegel raised against what he saw as the one-sided attempts by his fellow post-Kantians, in particular of Fichte and Schelling. After all, if thinking is all there is and if thinking is taken to be not primarily and exclusively an activity of a (human) subject or something that can be present to the senses, but is conceived of as self-standing conceptual and in this respect ideal activity that opens up first and foremost a space for opposition in the general shape of subject and object of knowledge, then indeed, as he puts it, "every philosophy is essentially idealism" (*GW* 21: 142) as long as it shares, whether explicitly or implicitly, this basic conviction of the reality of thinking. This idealism is non-oppositional, because for such an idealism "the opposition between

idealistic and realistic philosophy is therefore without meaning" (*GW* 21: 142). One might thus doubt whether the term "idealism" is a fitting name for the position that Hegel endorses. This term may be misleading, suggesting that for Hegel the term "thinking" points in the direction of the mental, the spiritual. Although Hegel wants these connotations to obtain in certain contexts, they play no role in his metaphysical views. There the only relevant fact is the reality of thinking and the consequences of this fact. Hegel himself seems not to have been too happy with the term "idealism" as a characterization of his philosophy. This is shown by the fact that he very rarely uses it for this purpose. However, setting aside questions of terminology, it is safe to say that for Hegel's general conception and defense of idealism three points are the most important to acknowledge: (1) it is a metaphysical conception of idealism, although it can be arrived at by epistemological means; (2) it is a conception that establishes idealism by relying on the sole reality of thinking, which in turn is taken to be an immediate fact, a given (*Vorhandenes*, cf. *GW* 21: 55f.) in an almost Cartesian fashion; (3) however, contrary to the Cartesian "I think," this real thinking is not conceived of as an activity of a human or non-human subject but as a self-standing and self-organizing activity that in the process of its own determination gives rise to conceptions of both subject and object founded in the primordial identity of thinking and being. Hegel certainly departs from Berkeley's substance-based idealism, on which all that exists is finite minds and their ideas and the infinite mind and its manifestations. But it can certainly be asked what pure thinking not grounded in thinkers is supposed to be.

Hegel's basic claim as to the identity of thinking and being might be thought to have some initial plausibility if one takes such a claim to be a somewhat metaphorical expression of the view that in our human ways of thinking about objects some conceptual elements are invariably involved. Understood along these lines, Hegel's claim could be considered, as it often is, as nothing but a peculiar version of Kant's empirical realism. Such an interpretation might even be suggested by the impression that Hegel as well as Kant takes thinking to be an activity that is characterized by operating on and with concepts and that what Hegel calls "being" can easily be identified with what within Kant's epistemological framework is called "reality," that is, the empirical reality of intuited objects rather than their transcendent grounds. Given the enormous influence Kant's critical project had on all the post-Kantian idealists this impression is by no means entirely groundless. It might well be thought to capture Hegel's position in the *Phenomenology*, where the concept of "resistance" might be thought to have filled the role of

Kant's intuitions, with which we are "affected" by things in themselves. However, this interpretation is still misleading, or at least it does not capture Hegel's position in *The Science of Logic*, because it does not do justice to the ontological connotations that Hegel wants to connect with this identity claim. For the final form of Hegel's idealism it is indeed essential that the world and everything contained in it ultimately has to be conceived of as a manifestation of the activity of thought and thus as a conceptual item that has objective existence. Put differently, Hegel wants to prove that the world is but the unique way in which conceptual thinking has organized itself as reality in a process that is, according to him, best described as a process of self-realization, but of thinking itself, not of you or me as individual thinkers—we too are only manifestations of this activity. Viewed from this standpoint, the world as traditionally and common-sensically regarded as an assemblage of more or less independent objects standing in physical and sometimes social relations to each other seems to have become a strange place indeed. Each individual object contained in the world, be it a physical object (a tree, a lemon), a social one (a family, a society, a state), or a cultural one (an artwork, a religion), has to be taken to be an element in this process of self-realization, thus a partial manifestation of thinking the totality of which Hegel calls "reason" (*Vernunft*)—but not an object that exists independently of anyone's ideas, like we might have thought a stone or a lemon to do, or individual ideas, or individual thinkers of ideas. Obviously this conception of what the world and the objects it consists of really are—if it is not meant to be just another variation of either a dogmatic idealist claim in the spirit of Berkeley or a transcendental idealism à la Kant—has to use the term "reason" in a way that is different from the traditional or normal use in the history of modern philosophy since Descartes (or perhaps all of philosophy since Plotinus and Averroës or Ibn Rushd). And so it is. For Hegel reason is not one of the many faculties attributed to the mind of a human individual. Rather, Hegel thinks of reason as the process of thinking in general that provides what could be called a structural plan for its own realization in terms of the categories in which it manifests itself. Thus Hegel wants us to understand reason in a teleological and not in a psychological or representational sense (although for other philosophers, perhaps for Aristotle, these need not be opposed). In this sense reason comes to comprehend itself in a process whose end point is reached as soon as complete self-transparency of thinking is achieved and this means as soon as reason has understood its own reality. The unconventional connotations that Hegel wants us to connect with his concept of reason might sound confusing.

However, they belong to the way in which he tries to conceptualize his overall construction of reality as an organically self-realizing manifestation of reason. We will see in the sequel that many subsequent philosophers have tried to accept Hegel's insights into the structure of thought without taking on board his radical ontology, his complete equation of reality with such thought.

The belief in the reality of reason can be regarded as the hallmark of Hegel's idealistic conception of reality. His famous statement in the preface of his *Philosophy of Right* is a well-known document of this belief. It reads: "What is reasonable is real; and what is real is reasonable" (*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*) (*GW* 14.1: 14). As is obvious, the idealistic aspect of his view strictly speaking has to do with his theory of what he calls reason, the realization of which is the world or reality. This theory not only commits him to idealism because of its radical conceptualism—after all, reason is a conceptual activity—but also to his metaphysical monism, because of the singularity of reason which, for Hegel, is reality. Within the framework of this theory, reason is certainly conceived of as providing something like the conceptual master plan or the universal conceptual structure that governs all domains of reality from physical, social, and cultural phenomena down to the conceptual structure of the most basic individual kinds of objects and the structure of individual objects as well. This universal structure comes about by means of a process of conceptual self-determination that results in a complete exposition of the conceptual elements contained in reason, a process that is documented in Hegel's *Science of Logic*. But it leads to a situation in which reason has not only become fully transparent to itself as capturing the structure of all of reality, but as all of reality itself.

While Hegel definitely wanted to overcome what he took to be the shortcomings both of Kant's philosophy and of the positions of his post-Kantian contemporaries Fichte and Schelling, at the same time he did not want to give up on the post-Kantian project of transforming Kant's transcendental idealism, which restricts knowledge to the subject's own experience, into a robust new idealism based on dynamic principles of world-constitution that are found in the activity of thinking itself. He differed from Fichte and Schelling in that he does not ground thinking either in some activity of a subject, as did Fichte, or in a cognitively inaccessible primordial unity, as did Schelling (like Spinoza), but in the idea of a thoroughly conceptual organization of reality because of a thoroughly conceptual reality itself. His elaboration of this idea gives rise to what

he calls in the introduction to the second edition of the *Science of Logic* an "intellectual view of the universe" (*Intellektualansicht des Universums*) (*GW* 21: 34). This view is meant to reconcile the need for conceptual elements constitutive of traditional epistemologically motivated idealism with the categorical commitments characteristic of traditional ontological idealism yet in a way that no longer requires the opposition between epistemology and ontology, or between thought and being—for all has become thought. Hegel would ultimately find few followers willing to take this last step with him—just think of Karl Marx "standing Hegel on his head," that is, thinking of structures of thought as manifestations of material reality, for example, of tensions between capital and labor—but even those more committed to the self-structuring character of thought would usually be less willing to identify such thought with all that there is.

6

The German Response to Idealism I

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) heaped a great deal of invective on Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. For that reason, Schopenhauer is not always included among the German idealists. And indeed, nothing could be further from Hegel's version of absolute idealism, in which pure reason is the ultimate reality, than Schopenhauer's theory on which behind the realm of appearances constructed in accordance with our own conceptions of space, time, and causality—his form of the empirical realism side of Kant's transcendental idealism—there is a unitary reality that is utterly irrational or at least arational—his form of Kant's ontological realism, but flipped from practical to theoretical and from rational to arational. Nevertheless, since Schopenhauer works within a Kantian framework, and identifies underlying reality with pure activity, although of an arational rather than rational kind, it is useful to think of him within the framework of idealism.

Schopenhauer puts forward his theory in his main work *The World as Will and Representation* (*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*), first published in December, 1818 (with an 1819 date on its title page), and then in a much-expanded second edition in 1844 and yet another expanded edition in 1857. This book had been preceded by a doctoral dissertation *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (1813), which Schopenhauer subsequently regarded as the introduction to his magnum opus. The earlier work includes Schopenhauer's main modifications to the structure of Kant's epistemology, while the later work accepts Kant's idealist interpretation of this epistemology (Book I) and then replaces Kant's version of the doctrine of things in themselves with Schopenhauer's own version of the unitary non-rational will underlying all appearance (Book II). (Valuable works on Schopenhauer, including his relation to Kant, are Gardiner 1953; Magee 1983; Young 1987 and 2005; Janaway 1989; Atwell 1995; and Jacquette 2005. A thorough biography that details Schopenhauer's relations to the other German idealists is Cartwright 2010.)

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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Schopenhauer's acceptance of the empirical side of Kant's transcendental idealism combined with his non-rational version of Kant's ontological realism is on display throughout *The World as Will and Representation*. Schopenhauer accepts without reservation Kant's argument that space, time, and causality are forms of our own representation that we know a priori and impose upon the appearances of objects. He does precede this acceptance with a Fichtean argument that "The world is my representation," where the sheer "mineness" of representation is supposed to be a "form . . . more universal than any other form," including space, time, and causality (*WWR* §1, p. 23). Schopenhauer holds that

> no truth is more certain, no truth is more independent of all others and no truth is less in need of proof than this one: that everything there is for cognition (i.e., the whole world) is only an object in relation to a subject, an intuition of a beholder. (*WWR* §1, pp. 23–4)

This simple and perhaps inescapable thought may be regarded as the most fundamental epistemological motivation for any form of idealism. On the basis of this proposition, Schopenhauer then tries to distinguish his position from what he takes to be the skepticism of Hume, that there is a real question about whether there is either a subject or an object in addition to representations, and from the dogmatism of Fichte, that both of these can be proved; his own view as initially stated is rather that

> the object as such always presupposes the subject as its necessary correlate: so the subject always remains outside the jurisdiction of the principle of sufficient reason. (*WWR* §5, p. 35)

But, speaking of dogmatism, he simply accepts from Kant that

> space and time can not only be conceived abstractly, on their own and independently of their content, but they can also be intuited immediately,

and that

> This intuition is not some phantasm derived from repeated experience; rather, it is something independent of experience, and to such an extent that experience must in fact be conceived as dependent on it, since the

> properties of time and space, as they are known *a priori* in intuition, apply to all experience as laws that it must always come out in accordance with. (*WWR* §3, p. 27)

By this remark, Schopenhauer indicates his recognition that Kant derives his epistemological idealism from his understanding of the implications of our a priori cognition of space and time, but he does not attempt to explain Kant's inference or to add any argument of his own. Schopenhauer also does not doubt that there is something other than the representing subject beyond what it represents, an underlying reality beginning with its own body as it is rather than as it merely appears. He accepts Kant's insistence that there can be no appearance without something that appears (*CPuR* B xxvi).

However, Schopenhauer's fundamental departure from Kant is already suggested in this passage:

> We have immediate cognition of the thing in itself when it appears to us as our own body; but our cognition is only indirect when the thing in itself is objectified in other objects of intuition. (*WWR* §6, pp. 40–1)

What Schopenhauer means is that although we have an experience of our own bodies, as it were from the outside, through the same forms of space, time, and causality through which we experience all other bodies, including other animate bodies, and in this regard we experience all bodies including our own as mere appearance through the forms we impose on experience, we also have another experience, each of us of his or her own body, as it were from the inside, namely we have an experience of willing an action and of our bodies as the instruments of our wills, with no separation between will and action and thus no relevance of spatial separation, temporal succession, or difference between cause and effect. However—and this is the argument of Book II—our immediate experience of our own bodies as instruments of our wills is an experience of our actions being immediately determined by desire rather than by reason. "To the pure subject of cognition as such, [his] body is a representation like any other among objects," but

> *Will* . . . this alone gives him the key to his own appearance, reveals to him the meaning and shows him the inner workings of his essence, his deeds, his movements; (*WWR* §18, p. 124)

and what we discover when we look closely at our wills is that they are governed not by reason but by impulse, at its most fundamental level a

"dark, dull driving" (*WWR* §27, p. 174), and even at its highest, most clarified level, still desires or apparently "creative drives" that only "seem to perform their tasks from abstract, rational motives" (*WWR* §27, p. 182). It is not our planning and calculating drives that best express the real nature of the will but our genitals (*WWR* §20, p. 133). Of course, it is well known that following the lead of one's genitals is a pretty good formula for disappointment, and for Schopenhauer this reveals the frustration to which a will driven by desire ultimately leads: either one does not get what one wants, the object of one's desire, and is frustrated, or one does, but then one wants more, and either does not get that, so is frustrated, or does, but then wants more, and so on ad infinitum. Trying truly to satisfy desire is the height of irrationality, but for Schopenhauer there is nothing else we can will—we can at best try to escape from the clutches of will altogether, whether through art, asceticism, or compassion.

But of course, if the underlying nature of reality, the thing in itself, is nothing other than will, then escape from its clutches should not really be possible but should at most be apparent. And not only does Schopenhauer equate our experience of ourselves "from the inside" as desire-driven will with our own ultimate reality, our character as things in themselves; he also argues that we have no choice but to think of the underlying reality of *all* appearance in this way, because this is our only form of insight into—or acquaintance with—anything as a thing in itself. We can only "take the key to the understanding of the essence in itself of things" to be the

> key provided . . . by the immediate cognition of our own essence, and apply it to [the] appearances in the inorganic [and organic] world as well,

even appearances that are more remote from us than any others. Ultimate reality, because, Schopenhauer assumes,

> it is everywhere one and the same, . . . must be called *will* here as well as there, a name signifying the being in itself of every thing in the world and the sole kernel of every appearance. (*WWR* §23, pp. 142–3)

Schopenhauer devotes many pages to empirical descriptions of the similarities between the forces at work throughout the rest of nature and the merely apparently rational but really non-rational character of our own behavior, but of course the character of things in themselves cannot be inferred directly from any amount of empirical data; Schopenhauer derives his conclusion not from all this empirical illustration but rather from our

allegedly immediate rather than empirical insight into the character of our own wills and the very problematic premise that at bottom everything is essentially one. His position thus begins from an epistemological premise, namely that we can know ultimate reality through knowing ourselves, and reaches an ontological conclusion, that ultimate reality must be like ourselves, but in opposition to Kant and the other German idealists he assumes that our own nature is essentially non-rational and therefore that the ultimate character of reality, although it is in a certain sense like the mental, is also fundamentally non-rational.

It may seem far-fetched to think of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) as an idealist. After all, he presented himself as an almost fanatical anti-idealist throughout his life. In many of his published and unpublished writings as well as in his letters he expresses over and again his dislike and his disdain for what he calls "idealism." A telling summary of his position concerning idealism is to be found in his letter to Malwida von Meysenbug (October 20, 1888):

> and I treat idealism as untruthfulness that has become an instinct, a not-wanting-to-see reality at any price: every sentence of my writings contains contempt for idealism. (Nietzsche, eKGWB BVN-1888, 1135)

This harsh assessment is not easy to understand given Nietzsche's known sympathies with a "perspectival" approach to objects of cognition, his insistence that falsification or tampering (*Verfälschung*) is at the basis of most of our cognitive judgments, and his claims as to the dependence of knowledge on needs. Considerations like these suggest that in spite of his protests, at least the epistemological motivation for idealism is not alien to Nietzsche. At least some of his beliefs are compatible with what has been called here epistemological arguments for idealism although Nietzsche himself would have taken these beliefs to express a form of realism. However, before searching for and elaborating on possible idealistic tendencies in his own thoughts, we should find out what "idealism" meant for Nietzsche and why he was so hostile to it. (On Nietzsche's criticism of Kant but also "Kantian foundations," see Hill 2003. Among many treatments of Nietzsche's "perspectivism," see Danto 1965: ch. 3; Nehamas 1985: Part I; and Clark 1990. A thorough biography of Nietzsche and interpretation of his work is Young 2010.)

Idealism, for Nietzsche, seems to be a particularly unappealing form of metaphysics, in other words of philosophy as it has been practiced

throughout history from the era of the ancient Greeks up to his own time (because of his contempt for Kant's postulates of pure practical reason, Nietzsche gave little credence to Kant's theoretical critique of traditional metaphysics). He took philosophy in this traditional shape to be a somewhat enigmatic endeavor to pursue the mutually excluding tasks of (culture-forming) art and religion on the one hand and of (cognition-focused) science on the other (see *Nachgelassene Fragmente*: Notebook 19, [47], [62], [218]; *KSA* 7: 434). It is doomed to failure because of two fundamental shortcomings. The first is that it gives a privileged status to truth in declaring truth to be the ultimate goal at which it aims. This preoccupation with truth is based on the implicit assumption that truth has some overriding value. This assumption has never been justified, not even addressed by any philosopher. Nietzsche writes in the *Genealogy of Morals* (1887: section 24):

> Turn to the most ancient and most modern philosophies: all of them lack a consciousness of the extent to which the will to truth itself needs a justification, here is a gap in every philosophy—where does it come from? Because the ascetic ideal has so far been *lord* over all philosophy, because truth was set as being, as god, as the highest authority itself, because truth was not *allowed* to be a problem. Do you understand this "allowed to be"?—From the very moment that faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied, *there is a new problem as well*: that of the *value* of truth.—The will to truth needs a critique—let us hereby define our own task—the value of truth is tentatively to be *called into question*."
>
> (*KSA* 5: 401; Third Essay)

However, it is not the problem of the value of truth but the second shortcoming that, in Nietzsche's eyes, leads directly to metaphysics. It is the tendency of philosophers to deny the obvious, to neglect surfaces in favor of what is allegedly behind them, out of habitual weakness and anxiety to prefer the stable and immutable over and against change and becoming, so exemplified at the very beginning of Western philosophy by Plato. Nietzsche often expresses this critical sentiment in his published and unpublished writings. The following note is a nice example:

> On the psychology of metaphysics. This world is apparent—consequently there is a true world. This world is conditioned—consequently there is an unconditioned world. This world is full of contradiction—consequently there is a world free from contradiction. This world is

> becoming—consequently there is an existing [*seiende*] world. All false inferences (blind trust in reason: if A is, there must be its opposing concept B). It is suffering that inspires these inferences: at bottom there are wishes that such a world might be; similarly hatred of a world that causes suffering expresses itself through the imagination of another world, one full of value: the *ressentiment* of the metaphysicians against the actual world is here creative. (Notebook 8 [2]; reprinted in *KSA* 12: 327)

This tendency to "falsify" (*verfälschen*) or to "re-evaluate" or "reframe" (*umdeuten*) reality out of resentment is, according to Nietzsche, especially well documented in the idealistic tradition in metaphysics, as is shown paradigmatically in Plato's idealism. (On Nietzsche and Plato, see Silk and Stern 1981. On Nietzsche's complex attitude toward Socrates, see Nehamas 1998: ch. 5. On Nietzsche's concept of ressentiment, although chiefly in a moral context, see Reginster 2021.) It was Plato who invented the idea of another world that is much more real, much more true than the ever changing, always unstable world in which we live; he invented the fiction of the supreme reality of an imperishable and everlasting ideal world inhabited by archetypal ideas and immutable forms, a "world in itself" in comparison to which the "*Lebenswel*" of everyday experience is just a pale shadow. Yet Nietzsche seems undecided how to evaluate the real motives that led Plato to his idealism. Sometimes he wants to distinguish Plato from other idealists by crediting him with some obscure positive reason for endorsing idealism. In section 372 of *The Gay Science*, entitled precisely "Why we are not idealists," he writes:

> In sum: all philosophical idealism until now was something like an illness, except where, as in the case of Plato, it was the caution of an overabundant and dangerous health, the fear of overpowerful senses, the shrewdness of a shrewd Socratic". (*KSA* 3: 623)

However, there are other passages where Nietzsche is not in such a charitable mood and where he presents the ultimate reasons for Plato's strong leanings toward idealism as rooted in weakness and resentment just as with all the other idealists in the history of philosophy (e.g., *Ecce Homo* 3; *KSA* 6: 311). His ultimate verdict on metaphysics in all its ancient and modern forms is nicely expressed in the following note:

> On the psychology of metaphysics. The influence of fearfulness. What has been most feared, the cause of the most powerful suffering (the lust for

> domination, sexual lust, etc.) has been treated by humans most hostile and eliminated from the "true" world. Thus they have step by step wiped out the affects—claimed God to be the opposite of the evil, i.e., reality to consist in the negation of desires and affects (which is to say precisely in nothingness). Likewise they hate the irrational, the arbitrary, the accidental (as the cause of countless physical suffering). Consequently they negate this element in that-which-is-in-itself, they conceive it as absolute "rationality" and "purposiveness." In the same way they fear change, transitoriness: therein is expressed an oppressed soul, full of mistrust and bad experience. (The case of Spinoza: an inverted sort of person would count this change as charming). A playful being overladen with power would call precisely the affects, unreason, and change good in an eudaimonistic sense, together with their consequences, with danger, contrast, dissolution, etc.
>
> (*KSA* 13: 536)

However, this thoroughly critical assessment of all forms of idealisms as abominable expressions of intellectual weakness and vindictiveness seems to be at odds with another of Nietzsche's cherished beliefs, according to which we have to take reality to be not only dependent on but ultimately constituted by the respective perspectives on or the respective ways of interpreting what we encounter. This Nietzschean view can give rise to the impression that in the end he might have been closer to endorsing some form of epistemologically motivated idealism. This leads to the topics of perspectivism and interpretation (*Auslegung*) in Nietzsche.

Although the details are far from clear, the general tendency of his perspectivism is expressed quite well in aphorism 374 from *The Gay Science*:

> How far the perspectival character of existence extends, indeed whether it has any other character; whether an existence without interpretation, without "sense," does not become "non-sense"; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially an *interpreting* existence—that cannot be decided, as would be fair, even by the most studious and scrupulous analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis, the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself under its perspectival forms, and *solely* in these . . . . Rather, the world has once again become infinite to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations*. (*KSA* 3: 626)

This view, according to which, further, the world each of us is experiencing is the product of an interpretation forced on us by some unconscious

overriding drive (*Trieb*) that is the formative mark of the individual character of each of us, might be seen as endorsing a version of idealism if idealism is understood as the claim that what appears to be known as it is independent of the mind is in the end inescapably marked by the creative, formative, constructive activities of human mind, whether individual or collective, but without a firm insistence that reality is nothing but mind. However, it is far from clear whether Nietzsche wants us to think of this process of interpretation which leads to a specific perspective even as a mind-dependent activity. Sometimes it seems as if he is favoring a quasi-Humean view according to which the intellect operates in the service of some anonymous affective and emotional drives in such a way that it just provides a set of necessary means to consciously realize what drives force us to do. The first lines of the following note, for example, may point toward a metaphysical conception of idealism, but the last lines point in the more Humean direction:

> Against positivism, which would stand by the position "There are only facts," I would say: no, there are precisely no facts, only interpretations. We can establish no fact "in itself": it is perhaps nonsense to want such a thing. You say "Everything is subjective": but that is already an interpretation, the "subject" is not anything given, but something invented and added, something stuck behind . . . To the extent that the word "knowledge" [*Erkenntnis*] has any sense, the world is knowable: but it is interpretable differently, it has no sense behind it, but innumerable senses, "perspectivism." It is our needs that interpret the world: our drives and their to and fro. Every drive is a kind of domination, every one has its perspective, which it would force on all other drives as a norm.
>
> (Notebook 7 [60]; *KSA* 12: 315)

In other passages Nietzsche seems to be more in line with a by and large Kantian view according to which the intellect provides some rules of transformation of what is given by the senses as individual and discrete data into more general representations—although he does not seem much to approve of this process, perhaps under the lingering influence of his earliest philosophical hero, Schopenhauer. Thus we find him claiming in section 354 of *The Gay Science*:

> This is what *I* understand to be true phenomenalism and perspectivism: that due to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can

> become conscious is merely a surface- and sign-world, a world turned into generalities and thereby debased to its lowest common denominator,—that everything that enters consciousness thereby becomes superficial, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a mark of the herd, that all becoming-conscious involves a vast and fundamental corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization. (*KSA* 3: 593)

Be this as it may, it is by no means obvious that either his explicit criticism of idealism or his remarks on the ways we make up epistemic worlds prevent Nietzsche from coming close to an epistemologically motivated form of idealism himself. This is so because in epistemology his main enemy does not seem to be idealism but all forms of realism.

And although his epistemology does not explicitly imply any ontological claims, one could be tempted to see Nietzsche as toying with some ontological motivations for full-blown idealism. His speculations concerning the will to power as the ultimate dynamic foundation of all reality fall into this category. For example,

> Perspectivism is only a complex form of specificity[.] My idea is, that every specific body strives to become lord over all of space and to expand its force (—its will to power) and to repel everything that resists its own expansion. But it perpetually collides with the equal efforts of other bodies, and ends by making an arrangement ("unifying") with those that are closely enough related to it:—thus they conspire together to power. And the process goes on . . . (Notebook 14 [186]; *KSA* 13: 373f.)

This idea of conspiring forces as the supreme world-constituting entities can look like an allusion to Kant's physics of attraction and repulsion but also to a version of the idealism like those of Fichte and Schelling, because it too invites us to conceive of dynamic processes as ontologically prior to (physical or mental) objects and events. Thus, in the end there are no real obstacles to thinking of Nietzsche as an idealist on ontological as well as epistemological grounds, although the speculations that lead him in the former direction may be separable from the latter.

Yet, perhaps this somewhat blunt assessment should not be taken at face value, perhaps it should be read under a proviso that should apply to almost every determinate view attributed to Nietzsche. This is Nietzsche's general skepticism about the influence that should be granted to knowledge (*Erkennen*) when it comes to establishing an insight into the fundamental

character of reality. His deeply rooted hostility against the idea that the ultimate constitution of the reality is revealed to us by processes of cognition runs like a leitmotiv (to borrow a term from another of Nietzsche's heroes, Richard Wagner) through all his writings both published and unpublished. One of the most explicit expressions of this distrust in the power of knowledge/cognition is already to be found in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which is both his very first book, published in 1871 under the title *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, and one of his latest, published in a second edition in 1886 under the title *The Birth of Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism*. In this book, the 27-year-old Nietzsche expounds an aestheticism that relies heavily with respect to both content and terminology on Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the irrational will. According to this aestheticism, the cognitive access of human beings to the world is founded in and strongly mediated by the interaction of two antagonistic drives, named after two figures in Greek mythology the Dionysian and the Apollonian, that "conspire" (*sich miteinander verschwören*) to establish an illusionary worldview. The resulting conception of reality is an aesthetic one in that it does not claim to be "true" in the sense of giving an adequate account of the world and its ultimate constitution, rather it confesses to its deceitfulness, to its intention to deliberately falsify (*verfälschen*) essential aspects of reality in order to allow the individual person to endure and to overcome the inevitable sufferings of life. Nietzsche maintains that the delicate balance between the two drives is based on their mutually influencing each other, as is shown especially vividly in the Attic Greek tragedy which he takes to be the most felicitous artistic document of a worldview that is formed by these drives and rests not on objective data provided by scientific experience but on the needs of the individual human being to come to grips with the encounter of a world that comes across as an utterly chaotic natural and socio-cultural environment. This aesthetic worldview, according to Nietzsche, is undermined by what he calls "the theoretical man" (*der theoretische Mensch*) (*BoT* section 15; *KSA* 1: 98). He identifies Socrates as the first and paradigmatic representative of this species who is possessed by a "profound *delusion* . . . , namely the imperturbable belief that thought, as it follows the thread of causality, reaches down into the deepest abysses of being, and that it is capable, not simply of understanding existence, but even of *correcting* it. This sublime metaphysical illusion is an instinct which belongs inseparably to science" (*tiefsinnige Wahnvorstellung, . . . jener unerschütterliche Glaube, dass das Denken, an dem Leitfaden der Causalität, bis in die tiefsten Abgründe des Seins reiche, und dass das Denken das Sein nicht nur zu*

erkennen, sondern sogar zu corrigieren im Stande ist. Dieser erhabene metaphysische Wahn ist als Instinct der Wissenschaft beigegeben) (*BoT* section 15; *KSA* 1: 99). For Nietzsche the theoretical man in general and Socrates in particular are guided in their cognitive efforts by giving priority to the "mechanism of concepts, judgments and conclusions" (*BoT* section 15; *KSA* 1: 100) in the endeavor to cognize (*erkennen*) the world, thereby giving precedence to reason, logic, discursive rationality as necessary means of knowledge. This Socratic decision to privilege rationality, underlying virtually all philosophy until Schopenhauer's, comes at the expense of acknowledging those aspects of reality that are accessible only on the basis of setting into motion our Dionysian drive, namely our acknowledgment of the "dark," painful, chaotic features of the world. The dominance of the theoretical over the tragic view of the world that Nietzsche takes to be characteristic of modern times (*BoT* section 17; *KSA* 1: 111) implies that an approach to reality based solely on rational tools with the explicit exclusion of the irrational, that is, the disregard of what has to be reached by other than logical and conceptual means, cannot but lead to a one-sided, incomplete, and in the end dogmatic understanding of the world.

Against the background of this "aesthetic" attitude toward reality that goes together with an extremely critical assessment of occidental rationality as the guiding principle of human knowledge, it is no wonder that Nietzsche throughout his life kept aloof from all traditional Western forms of philosophy, above all the ultra-rationalist idealism of Hegel, forms that in his eyes were rooted in the Socratic-Platonic heritage of modern thinking. For him idealism as discussed in philosophical circles definitely represents one of these inherently problematic forms. Hence even if it looks as if his own views come close to idealism, it would be deceptive and disingenuous to bring any of his claims into a close or more distant affinity to any form of either epistemologically or metaphysically motivated idealism other than Schopenhauer's combination of empirical realism and transcendental irrationalism—but even then Nietzsche's conception of perspectivism can also be taken as a rejection of Schopenhauer's still Kantian transcendental idealism with its fixed categories of space, time, and causality. All that can be found are points of coincidence, of similarity and maybe even of complicity with ways of thinking that, he believes, are in the end not just misleading but dangerous because they diminish the chances of human beings to lead an authentic life.

At this point, the narrative of the development and fate of idealism becomes complicated. After the heyday of German idealism that ended

with Hegel's death, empiricism and materialism became more influential in German philosophy, even in philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche whose views, as we have just seen, also show traces of idealism thinking in the German-speaking world. Although it goes beyond the scope of this chapter, yet, as John Passmore put it, "traditional roles were curiously reversed: philosophizing of the British type was at its most powerful in Germany just at the time when philosophizing of the German type was exerting its greatest influence in Britain" (Passmore 1966: 49). Passmore was referring to the rise of British idealism, epitomized by such philosophers as Thomas Hill Green, Francis Herbert Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet, John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, and many others—or perhaps it would be better to say anglophone idealism, since the American Josiah Royce was also a powerful figure in this movement, which dominated anglophone philosophy from the 1870s and 1880s until World War I. This corresponds closely to the height of Neo-Kantianism in Germany, which was certainly not exactly empiricism, but which began from the assumption of the facticity of the natural sciences, or of the sciences (*Wissenschaften*) more broadly, aimed to elucidate the structural contributions of the human mind to human knowledge, thus combining Kantian inspiration with an empiricist openness to fact, but disavowed metaphysical speculation about any ultimate reality beyond human experience. One of the late and great representatives of Neo-Kantianism, Ernst Cassirer, called his own position "critical idealism," but by that he meant only that all forms of human representation and knowledge, whether natural science, mathematics, language, religion, art, history, and more are structured by what he earlier called "functions" of human thought and later "symbolic forms," not any metaphysical equation of reality with mind. Our narrative then becomes complicated for the following reason. Analytic philosophy as it has been practiced for most of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first is often thought to have begun in the revolt of George Edward Moore and Bertrand Russell against British idealism, above all against the work of Bradley, informed in turn, at least in the case of Russell, by the work in logic and philosophy of language of the German mathematician Gottlob Frege. Neo-Kantianism is not typically thought to have played much of a role at all in the development of analytic philosophy; for example, the magnificent *Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy* edited by Michael Beaney has no chapter on Neo-Kantianism at all (Beaney 2013). But, as Michael Friedman and others have shown (Friedman 2000), the work of Rudolf Carnap and Hans Reichenbach emerged from the background of Neo-Kantianism, and their

work influenced leaders of the next generations of analytic philosophy such as Carl Hempel, W. V. O. Quine, Hilary Putnam and many others. In many ways, a version of Neo-Kantian epistemology, that we always know the world through the particulars of human ways of perceiving and conceptualizing reality, became the default position of analytic philosophy, although of course with plenty of squabbles over the details: Quine rejected the idea that we could say anything a priori about necessary features of human conceptualization, for example, even anything like the "relativized *a priori*" adopted by Reichenbach and much later by Friedman, and Donald Davidson's rejection of any distinction between conceptual "scheme" and "content" followed in the footsteps of Quine's rejection of the analytic–synthetic distinction. Nevertheless, the view that human knowledge is permeated by and valid from the human point of view combined with the view that claims about how things are apart from this point of view are pretty much meaningless has been characteristic of most analytic philosophy, and its realism has rarely been "naive realism," the claim that it makes sense to say that we know things exactly how they really are. So Passmore's further statement that "it was with weapons forged in Britain but sharpened in Germany that twentieth-century British empiricism won its victories over Anglo-German Idealism" (Passmore 1966: 49) is correct if we read it to say that it was with a combination of the British reaction to British idealism and the Neo-Kantian rejection of traditional German idealism that modern analytic philosophy was forged. (Although in the more than 600 pages of his comprehensive and insightful *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, first published in 1957 and revised in 1966, Passmore spared only three pages for the earliest stage of Neo-Kantianism and then later a page and a half for Cassirer.)

What would be correct to say in this context is that the reaction of Russell and Moore to British and especially to Bradley's idealism was the first stage in the formation of modern analytic philosophy, taking place in the years from the late 1890s until World War I, a period perhaps to be extended to include the publication of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logo-philosophicus* in 1919 and its English translation in 1921, while the influence of Neo-Kantianism made its way into the mainstream of analytic philosophy in the 1920s and 1930s, even though Cassirer was the only one of the German Neo-Kantians still publishing major works at that time. So in the following chapters, we will first discuss British idealism, which is certainly full-blown idealism as we have defined it, that is, a metaphysical view that reality is essentially mental, then the response to it in Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein; after that we will step back in time to resume the discussion of

German philosophy with Neo-Kantianism. Our conclusion will be that although Neo-Kantianism shares characteristic features of idealist epistemology (the word "epistemology" or its German source, *Erkenntnislehre*, is in fact a Neo-Kantian coinage, often credited to Richard Hönigswald, 1913), it is not in fact idealism, and is a significant source for the somewhat idealist epistemology but rejection of idealist metaphysics characteristic of most analytic philosophy. (In the end, we will mention a few exceptions to this rule, that is, efforts to revise idealist metaphysics within analytic philosophy broadly enough construed.)

7
British and American Idealism

In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century English-speaking world idealism became an important approach across a wide spectrum of philosophical discussions ranging from metaphysics via aesthetics to moral and social theories. In England, Scotland, and Wales an idealism that was ultimately both epistemological and ontological in motivation became the dominant approach to philosophy from the 1870s (ironically, perhaps, 1872 marked the birth of Bertrand Russell and 1873 the death of John Stuart Mill, of course the foremost spokesman for empiricism in nineteenth-century Britain). Idealism was especially prominent at Oxford and in the Scottish universities, although there were pockets of resistance, such as at Cambridge and the University of London. Especially at Oxford, the primary training ground for the British political elite, idealism became the driving force of social and political thought through the influence of T. H. Green, Benjamin Jowett, and Edward Caird as successive Masters of Balliol College, and others (see Mander 2011: ch. 7; Mander 2016). In the United States, idealism could not monopolize philosophy to the same degree, having to share the stage with and ultimately reach an accommodation with the home-grown pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey (who himself underwent a transition over his long career from Hegelianism to pragmatism), but it nevertheless also flourished for several decades. There were too many participants in this transatlantic idealist movement for us to mention let alone discuss all of them here, but among the best-known and most outspoken spokesmen in favor of idealistic conceptions in metaphysics and elsewhere in Britain in these years were Thomas Hill Green and Francis Herbert Bradley at Oxford and John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart at Cambridge, while in the United States the most prominent idealist was Josiah Royce at Harvard, where idealism's having to share the stage with pragmatism was personified in Royce's friendly rivalry with James and in Royce's ultimate attempt to synthesize his view with that of Peirce. Although all of these figures are frequently characterized as being indebted to Hegel's writings and advocating a Hegelian view of reality, their various positions are at best in a somewhat indirect, almost only metaphorical, sense informed

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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by Hegel's philosophy. In fact, these philosophers were more willing to call themselves idealists than had been the earlier German idealists who supposedly inspired them, but who as has been argued were just as interested in escaping as in accepting the label. Rather, in many ways the Anglo-American defense of idealism goes back to a state of the discussion characteristic of the period prior to Hegel and German idealism in general, instead employing an understanding of idealism influenced by eighteenth-century disputes in the wake of Berkeley. None of these figures except perhaps Royce continued to explore a dynamic conception of idealism distinctive of Hegel and the other German idealists—Royce in fact wrote more extensively and insightfully on Hegel and his immediate predecessors than any of the others with the possible exception of McTaggart (who was eleven years younger than Royce and began publishing a decade later, although not obviously influenced by the American). In general, the late nineteenth-century idealists were more inclined to think of idealism again as a genuine, metaphysical alternative to materialism and to embark again on the controversy whether matter on the one hand or mind or spirit on the other is the ultimate "stuff" of reality. These philosophers were thus more willing to identify themselves as idealists than had been their predecessors. However, these philosophers were not all equally complete monists, that is, insistent on reducing all reality to mind. Both Bradley and McTaggart, for whom a defense of idealism consists mainly in establishing the ontological point that reality is exclusively spirit, were, and thus their idealism could also be called mental or spiritual monism. But both Green at the beginning of the movement and Royce toward its end strove for more nuanced positions, not excluding the existence of matter from their idealisms, and thus resisted monism, while still insisting that some form of mind or spirit was the most important and dominant feature of reality. But all their efforts to establish a convincing form of idealism, whether in the form of spiritualism or in a form that allowed some role for matter as well, became rapidly unfashionable even during the lifetimes of all these philosophers (except for Green, who died young) due to what was called "the revolt against idealism" staged at the turn of the twentieth century in Britain by Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore and a decade later in the United States by a group of "New Realists." However, as we will suggest, at least Russell was himself pushed back in the direction of some form of idealism, perhaps only on epistemological grounds, by the time his own thought reached the stage of his "logical atomism." For the most part, however, after the attacks on Bradley and Royce, explicit avowal of metaphysical idealism became rare, with a few exceptions such as the

prominent defense of idealism by Brand Blanshard in the 1930s and several spirited but less prominent defenses by a small number of subsequent philosophers, such as Timothy Sprigge and John Foster in the 1980s.

Thomas Hill Green (1836–82) was the first of the great Oxford idealists. He is best remembered for a lengthy polemic with Hume that he published in the form of an introduction to a collected edition of Hume that he co-edited (Hume 1874) and for his posthumously published *Prolegomena to Ethics*, which is a polemic against utilitarianism from the point of view of a perfectionism inspired by Kant as well as by Hegel. But the first of the four books of the *Prolegomena* is a "Metaphysics of Knowledge," beginning with a statement of "The Spiritual Principle in Knowledge and in Nature" (1893: 13), which argues for a form of idealism on both epistemological and ontological grounds, and Green's posthumous works included a set of lectures on Kant in which he engaged quite directly with Kant's form of idealism. Green also left behind a set of *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* that form one of the crucial documents of the political and social philosophy of British idealism.

Green's motivation in arguing for idealism in the *Prolegomena* is to prepare the way for a conception of the will as free and creative as the foundation of his ethics—in this regard Green's view is as much in the spirit of Kant's practical idealism as it is Hegelian. Green's idealism is expounded in three main steps. First, and here also much influenced by Kant, he argues that knowledge never consists in the mere apprehension of discrete items, but in the recognition of order or relation, and that such order or relation is not given but is constituted by and in consciousness. Thus,

> The terms "real" and "objective"... have no meaning except for a consciousness which presents its experiences to itself as determined by relations, and at the same time conceives a single and unalterable order of relations determining them, with which its temporary presentation, as each experience occurs, of the relations determining it may be contrasted.
>
> (1893: 17)

From this he infers that

> experience, in the sense of a consciousness of events as a related series—and in no other sense can it help to account for the knowledge of an order of nature—cannot be explained by any natural history, properly so called
>
> (1893: 21–2)

but must instead be constituted by mind itself, or,

> the understanding which presents an order of nature to us is in principle one with an understanding which constitutes that order itself. (1893: 23)

Thus far, Green's position could be considered an epistemological argument for idealism. However, he quickly moves beyond a merely epistemological argument, because his next move is to argue that since the order of which any individual human being is in various ways and to various degrees aware obviously extends beyond what could plausibly be thought to be constituted just by that individual, the order of which we are each aware must be constituted by a mind or intelligence greater than that of any of us, thus there must be "an eternal intelligence realized in the related facts of the world," and the world must be "a system of related facts rendered possible by such an intelligence," which intelligence "partially and gradually reproduces itself in us, communicating piece-meal but in inseparable correlation" aspects of that order to each of us if not complete knowledge of it to any of us (1893: 38). Green's insistence on a supra-individual intelligence as the source of cosmic order in which individual intelligences in some way participate is a decided move beyond epistemology, and in his own view it is also a significant departure from Kant, whose agnosticism about the real nature of things in themselves, at least in the theoretical mood, "would at once withhold us" from such an inference to the "spirituality of the real world" (1893: 43). However, and here is the third main thesis of Green's form of idealism, the participation of individual human beings in the supra-individual intelligence which constitutes the comprehensive system of relations can be seen as an apprehension of some portion of that order by *animal organisms*:

> in the growth of our experience, in the process of our learning to know the world, an animal organism, which has its history in time, gradually becomes the vehicle of an eternally complete consciousness. (1893: 72)

It is the eternal consciousness,

> as so far realized in or communicated to us through modification of the animal organism, that constitutes our knowledge, with the relations, characteristic of knowledge, into which time does not enter, which are not in becoming but are once for all what they are. (1893: 73)

Green's form of spiritualism is thus not intended to be incompatible with ontological dualism: the object of all knowledge is the complete and eternal order of things, which must be constituted by an intelligence greater than that of any individual human being, but individual human beings are in fact organisms, thus matter, to which some aspect of that intelligence is communicated. The epistemological aspect of Green's idealism is complete, because knowledge on the part of an individual is understood as consisting in a grasp of an order that is itself mental, but his ontology is not exclusively mentalistic, for while it includes the necessary existence of a supra-individual intelligence or spirit it also allows the existence of animal organisms (and thus presumably of other forms of matter as well). As Passmore put it, Green thinks that "the distinction and connexion between individual and eternal consciousness allows the Idealist to admit what is true in materialism without departing from his major principles" (Passmore 1966: 59).

Francis Herbert Bradley (1846–1924), however, argued for a more exclusively idealist ontology; he also rejects Green's view that reality ultimately consists in relations; instead, that mental reality is an "absolute," although we can only conceive it imperfectly in relational terms: "a relational way of thought must give appearance and not truth . . . it is a makeshift, a mere practical compromise, most necessary, but in the end most indefensible" (1893: 28). Bradley was a student at University College, Oxford, and a lifelong fellow of Merton College. He published three main works: his *Ethical Studies* (1876), *Principles of Logic* (1883), and the book that presented his metaphysical views on the constitution and the main characteristics of reality most explicitly, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*, which was first published in 1893 and reprinted many times during his lifetime (and later). His reputation as a metaphysician was largely destroyed by the attack of Moore and Russell that we will discuss, but his *Logic*, even though it was not mathematical logic, may have helped Russell to some of his philosophical results, such as his famous theory of definite descriptions. Perhaps his *Ethical Studies* has best sustained its reputation. (On Bradley and Russell, see Horstmann 1984 and Hylton 1990; more generally, see Taylor 1903; Wollheim 1959; Passmore 1966: 60–9; Manser 1983; Mander 1994; Mander 2011: chs. 4.2, 5.5, and 6.1; and Mander 2020, ch.12).

Bradley famously proceeds from the claim that the traditional and received "ideas by which we try to understand the universe" are contradictory (1893: 11 [1897: 9]). But surely reality cannot be self-contradictory—nobody

can deny that and still make sense—so these traditional ideas of reality must be false. Thus Bradley rejects any identity between ultimate reality and our *ordinary* modes of perception and conception ("thought"). He substantiates this claim by examining a range of central concepts from metaphysics and epistemology, among them the concepts of primary and secondary qualities, of substance and attribute, of quality and relation, space and time, of causality as well as the concept of a thing and that of the self. The best known of his destructive arguments against these conceptions is that against qualities and relations because it played a role in the discussion that arose at the turn of the twentieth century between Bradley, Russell, and Moore (among others) about the logical and ontological status of relations, that is, whether they are "internal" or "external" to their terms. As to qualities and relations Bradley claims:

> The arrangement of given facts into relations and qualities may be necessary in practice, but it is theoretically unintelligible. The reality, so characterized, is not true reality, but is appearance. (1893: 25 [1897: 21])

He starts with pointing out that "[q]ualities are nothing without relations" (ibid.). This is so because in order to be qualities they have to differ from other qualities and hence have to be distinct. However, without relations they could not be distinct. But distinctiveness presupposes plurality and plurality relations.

> Their plurality depends on relation, and, without that relation, they are not distinct. But, if not distinct, then not different, and therefore not qualities. (1893: 28 [1897: 24])

Not only without relations are qualities nothing, "[u]nfortunately, taken together with them, they are equally unintelligible" (1893: 30 [1897: 25]). The reason is that one cannot account for their distinctiveness if their distinctiveness is based only on their being different: "In short, qualities in a relation have turned out as unintelligible as were qualities without one" (1893: 31–2 [1897: 27]). The same holds, according to Bradley, from the side of relations. "They are nothing intelligible, either with or without their qualities" (1893: 32 [1897: 27]). They are nothing intelligible without qualities because "a relation without terms seems mere verbiage" (ibid.). They are nothing intelligible with qualities either for in order for a relation to relate it must stand in a relation to what it relates which makes it into a

quality that requires "a *new* connecting relation" (ibid.) if it is to relate to that quality. Bradley summarizes as the result:

> The conclusion to which I am brought is that a relational way of thought—any one that moves by the machinery of terms and relations—must give appearance, and not truth. (1893: 33 [1897: 28])

The result of his examination not just of the concepts of quality and relation but of all the other concepts he deals with consists in the verdict that all attempts to capture the true nature of reality in terms of these categories are futile because all these concepts are unintelligible, inconsistent, and in the end self-contradictory. He even applies this critique to two concepts accepted without demure by many other idealists, those of the self and of God (Passmore 1966: 65). This means that what is designated by means of these concepts cannot be real, but can only reflect the way the world appears to us, not the way it really is. This diagnosis is based on Bradley's fundamental conviction that "ultimate reality is such that it does not contradict itself" (1893: 136 [1897: 120]). He takes this to be "an absolute criterion" (ibid.). However, to be just appearance is not to be unreal in the sense of an illusion. On the contrary, although appearance is "inconsistent with itself," one cannot deny its existence or "divorce it from reality" because "reality, set on one side and apart from all appearance, would assuredly be nothing" (1893: 132 [1897: 114]).

But does this ontological argument for idealism exclude epistemology altogether? That is, since appearance always proves to be an inadequate way in which reality is present to us, is it beyond our means ever to become acquainted with the true essence of ultimate reality or can we avoid skepticism and claim that it is indeed possible for us to have access to the constitutive nature of reality? Bradley emphatically endorses the latter possibility. According to him, the self-contradictoriness of what is appearance already implies that there is positive knowledge of reality: reality has to be One in the sense that it does not allow discord and it must be such that it can include diversity (cf. 1893: 140 [1897: 123]), that is, "the Absolute is . . . an individual and a system" (1893: 144 [1897: 127]). This character of reality as an internally diversified individual system is revealed to us in sentient experience. "Sentient experience . . . is reality, and what is not this is not real" (ibid.). According to Bradley it is this sentient experience that "is commonly called psychical existence" (ibid.). The material basis of sentient experience is exhausted in feeling, thought, and volition. Thus reality consists in what

has to be taken as the undifferentiated unity of these modes of sentient experience before these modes make their appearance as different aspects of experience. This leads Bradley to assume that what is ultimately real is just what gives rise to appearances where appearances have to be understood as specific forms under which the underlying undifferentiated unity appears in each of these different aspects of experience. In his words:

> . . . there is no way of qualifying the Real except by appearances, and outside the Real there remains no space in which appearances could live.
>
> (1893: 551 [1897: 489])

Although he concedes "our complete inability to understand this concrete unity in detail" he insists that this inability "is no good ground for our declining to entertain it" (1894: 160 [1897: 141]). In a way, although not usually noticed, and certainly not suggested by Bradley himself, this brings his philosophy closer to that of Schopenhauer than to that of Hegel, which he rejected: just as Schopenhauer thought that we could do no other than to infer from our own experience of the will that ultimately reality must be something like that, so Bradley infers from our own, undifferentiated and not yet abstracted experience that reality must be something like that. Experience and reality, if not abstract thought and reality, do come back together for Bradley. And although he claims at the end of his metaphysical essay that he does not know whether his "conclusions" are to be called Realism or Idealism (1893: 547 [1897: 485]), at the very end he nevertheless abruptly states: "We may fairly close this work then by insisting that Reality is spiritual" (1893: 552 [1897: 489]). This might lead us to assume that, "in the end" (a favorite phrase of Bradley's), it was primarily his search for a basis for spiritualism that motivated him to explore the true nature of reality; in other words, he was ultimately driven by an impulse toward idealism by ontological premises even though he had developed powerful epistemological arguments for a holistic version of metaphysical idealism. As one author has written, "There is no getting around the fact that Bradley's final position as to our knowledge of ultimate reality is complex and nuanced" (Mander 2020, 298). After all, both appearance and reality can be characterized as mind.

The identification of idealism with spiritualism, thus again an ontological interpretation of idealism, is most explicit in the works of John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart (1866–1925). McTaggart was the dominant idealist at Cambridge, where he was first a student, then a Prize Fellow and lecturer

in Moral Science at Trinity College, and there the tutor of both Moore and Russell. (On McTaggart, see Passmore 1966: 76–82; Broad 1933–8; Geach 1979; Mander 2011: ch. 10.1.3). His earliest work, "The Further Determination of the Absolute" (first published as a pamphlet in 1893, then as chapter IX of *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* [1901a] and in *Philosophical Studies* [1934]), starts with the following proclamation:

> The progress of an idealistic philosophy may, from some points of view, be divided into three stages. The problem of the first is to prove that reality is not exclusively matter. The problem of the second is to prove that reality is exclusively spirit. The problem of the third is to determine what is the fundamental nature of spirit. (1901a [1934: 210f.])

And the last of his writings published in his lifetime ("An Ontological Idealism") starts with the confession, explicitly employing the same terminology that we have used here: "Ontologically I am an Idealist, since I believe that all that exists is spiritual" (1924 [1934: 273]). He takes spirit to be the sum total of individual spirits or selves connected by the relation of love, and bases this conviction on the claim that only this conception of what ultimate reality consists in allows us to overcome unavoidable contradictions connected with all other attempts to reconcile unity and diversity as the distinguishing marks of reality. Harmony between unity and diversity can be established only on the basis of an all-encompassing relation of love between all the characteristic elements of reality, which in turn presupposes thinking of ultimate reality as a community of spirits or as Spirit. These—as McTaggart himself admits (1924 [1934: 271f.])—rather mystical-sounding assertions, which he adhered to all his life, he tries to back up by a number of different considerations. In his earliest writing he relies heavily on views held by Bradley to the effect that we have to accept that contradictions are a criterion for non-reality. However, he does not employ this criterion as a logical maxim with an implication for the nature of reality but transforms it into a more active ontological principle according to which nothing that *prevents* harmony can be real—so the active principle of reality must rather be something positive, namely love. In his last work, his attempt to present an argument for his ontological idealism is based mainly on (1) mereological considerations concerning the structure of substances which aim to show that only spirits can claim the status of a substance, and on (2) his theory of time, the unreality of which he famously had proven in his magnum opus *The Nature of Existence* (1921–7). In the first volume of this work he

attempts to prove by what he calls an a priori method (in contrast to inductive reasoning based on observation) (*NE* §43) that all that really exists are substances. Substances according to McTaggart are infinitely divisible and therefore cannot have simple parts. Between substances and their individual features there obtains a relation of "determining correspondence" such that each feature determines and is determined by all the others. Given these a priori characteristics of what can exist the task McTaggart tackles in the second volume is to

> consider various characteristics as to which our experience gives us . . . a prima facie suggestion that they are possessed either by all that exists, or by some existent things (*NE* §295)

and to ask

a. "which of these characteristics can really be possessed by what is existent" and
b. "of those which are found to be possible characteristics of the existent, whether any of them can be known to be actual characteristics of it" (*NE* §295).

This double task cannot be settled by a priori means but has to be approached by starting from empirical assumptions based on experience. If one has to acknowledge that the ways we are bound to conceive of all these experiential or phenomenal characteristics lead to contradictions then these characteristics cannot be true of reality. McTaggart's strategy here is strongly reminiscent of Bradley's procedure to downgrade many phenomena to appearances and to deny them the status of constitutive elements of reality. The empirically given characteristics McTaggart discusses primarily are (a) time, (b) matter, (c) sensa, (d) spirit, and (e) cogitation. As to (a) time he denies that "anything existent [can] possess the characteristic of being in time" (*NE* §303) where time is understood as an ordering relation between events. He distinguishes between two ways of ordering in time. The first gives rise to what he calls the "A-series" according to which every state of affairs (event, thing) is either past or present or future. The second, the so-called "B-series," relates transitively and asymmetrically states of affairs in terms of earlier and later (cf. *NE* §306). He claims that the A-series is more fundamental than the B-series because only the A-series can account for change (*NE* §317) and goes on to demonstrate that (a) without an A-series

there is no B-series in a temporal sense (cf. *NE* §333) yet that (b) the (more fundamental) A-series leads to time determinations of a state of affairs that are contradictory. The result:

> We conclude that the distinctions of past, present and future are essential to time, and that, if the distinctions are never true of reality, then no reality is in time. (*NE* §324)

Though never true of reality these distinctions are not empty, because according to McTaggart they have to be taken as appearances of a third series, the C-series, "a series which is not a time series, but under certain conditions appears to us to be one." This C-series "does actually exist in every case in which there is the appearance of a time-series" (*NE* §347). McTaggart thinks of the C-series (at least in *The Nature of Existence*) as an "Inclusion Series" (*NE* §575)

> whose members are connected by the relations "inclusive of" and "inclusive in", so that of any two terms one will be inclusive of the other, and the other will be included in it. (*NE* §575)

Concerning (b) matter, which he characterizes as "something which possesses the primary qualities" (*NE* §355), he also wants to prove that it does not exist (*NE* §364). This is so because all that exists are substances that have to be infinitely divisible. Matter, however,

> cannot be divided into parts of parts to infinity either in respect of its spatial dimensions, or of that dimension which appears as temporal. And matter, as usually defined, and as we have defined it, has no other dimensions.... And therefore it cannot exist." (*NE* §362)

The existence of matter can also not be inferred on the basis of the prima facie existence of what we perceive "by means of the sense organs of our bodies", that is, of what he calls "sensa" (*NE* §373), because it is erroneous to believe that matter as the presumed outside cause of a sensum has the same qualities as a sensum and thus has to exist (cf. *NE* §365). He conjectures that if there are outside causes of sensa they must be substances which are "of a spiritual nature" (*NE* §371).

When it comes to (c) sensa, McTaggart holds that one has to distinguish between two classes of percepta, those perceived by introspection (mental

states, spiritual data) and those that are given by means of sense organs (sensa). The latter do not really exist, they just lead to the illusion that they exist. This is so because of a confusion between a perception that is part of the percipient and therefore spiritual or mental in character and what is perceived, that is, the object of a perception or the perceptum (cf. *NE* §373). However, a perceptum as a sensum cannot, according to McTaggart, have parts within parts to infinity and thus cannot really exist because what exists has no simple parts (cf. 355). Having disposed of matter and sensa this way, he then discusses the ontological status of (d) spirit or spirituality. He declares that "the quality of spirituality . . . is the quality of having content, all of which is the content of one or more selves" (*NE* §381) and states that "nothing can have this quality except substances, and so nothing but substances are spiritual" and exist or are real (ibid.). A self or an I he takes to be a simple quality of a substance which is known to me to be myself by direct perception, that is, is known by acquaintance, not by description. The distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description he explicitly takes up from Russell (*NE* §382, cf. also §44). He then surmises that it is very likely that the I, that is, the substance that possesses the quality of being a self, persists through time because "I perceive myself as persisting through time, or the real series which appears as a time-series" (*NE* §395). He also holds that selves are conscious without having to be self-conscious (*NE* §397) and that no experience is possible "which is not part of a self" (*NE* §400) though it cannot belong to more than one self (*NE* §401). He concludes:

> As all the content of spirit falls within some self, and none of it falls within more than one self, it follows that all existent selves form a set of parts of that whole which consists of all existent spirits. (*NE* §404)

Although written more than twenty years after G. E. Moore's "The Refutation of Idealism" (see below) and without mentioning him at all, McTaggart thus arrives at the exact opposite to the conclusion that Moore defended.

Regarding (e) cogitations which comprise perceptions, awarenesses of characteristics, judgments, assumptions, imaginings, only perceptions can form an infinite series required for existence (*NE* §406). Perception he characterizes as awareness of a substance *as having* such and such qualities (*NE* §407). The outcome he wants to have reached so far is this:

> . . . spirit, unlike matter and sense, can really exist. But it can do so only if it contains no parts except perceptions and groups of perceptions. (*NE* §426)

All these considerations as to the character or the nature of time, matter, sensa, spirit, and cogitations are meant to establish two results. The first is "that nothing which is spiritual is also 'material or sensal' (*sic*) [although this result] leaves it possible that what is really spiritual may *appear* as being material or sensal" (*NE* §431). The second is McTaggart's version of idealism:

> No substance has material or sensal qualities, and all reality is spirit. This conclusion I propose . . . to call by the name of Idealism" (*NE* §432),

in an ontological sense, though, as he remarks, the terms "Spiritualism" or "Psychism" might be "intrinsically better" to characterize his point of view (*NE* §432).

It is interesting to note that McTaggart does not believe that his metaphysical (ontological) spiritual idealism excludes a realistic stance in epistemology. This is so because he characterizes epistemological realism as a position that is based on a correspondence theory of truth according to which a belief is true if it corresponds to a fact. Because everything that is real is a fact and (according to McTaggart) nothing is unreal (although it may not exist), all beliefs about something are beliefs about facts and consequently about something that is epistemologically real. Although this concept of epistemological realism is vague, it suggests that McTaggart thought of idealism not primarily in opposition to realism but much more in terms of a doctrine that is opposed to materialism, that is, as an ontological rather than epistemological doctrine. However, since McTaggart makes clear that since matter and mind are the only candidates for genuine substantiality *of which we know*, and thus that while only mind or spirit satisfies the ontological conditions for substantiality, *for all we know* there might be some other alternative, so his argument for idealism is not conclusive. His argument is predominantly ontological, but does presuppose one crucial epistemological premise.

In sum: Unlike other British idealists who may have affirmed some form of dualist idealism, or unlike F. H. Bradley, who affirmed the existence of the "Absolute" without quite equating it with mind, although he seemed to conclude that it must be more like mind than like anything else, McTaggart positively affirmed idealism in its monistic form throughout

his career in that he claims that only minds exist because of their substantiality. His main argument for this position proceeds, like Leibniz's, by positing criteria for genuine substancehood that only minds can satisfy. Contrary to Leibniz, however, McTaggart supposes that genuine substance must be infinitely divisible, but then, closer to Leibniz, that their infinite parts must be related by "determining correspondence," each part determining every other. He then concludes that mind or spirit, which can represent infinite divisibility and determining correspondence as well, is the only candidate for genuine substancehood, and hence the only thing that really exists. In further similarity to Leibniz, he supposes that there is a multiplicity of minds, harmoniously related, although by their own love for one another rather than by an external act of God (*NE* ch. XLI). McTaggart admits that there is something provisional about his argument, for it is only our "experience" and our "imagination" that suggest that the only candidates for reality are matter, sensa, and mind. Thus there is no a priori proof that his enumeration is complete, so "we are entitled to hold all substance to be spiritual, not as a proposition which has been rigorously demonstrated, but as one which it is reasonable to believe and unreasonable to disbelieve" (*NE* §428). Here then he seeks to back off his dogmatic idealism, coming back to something closer to Bradley's position. But he does employ what might be considered an epistemological rule of inference in his metaphysical argument—crudely put, don't worry about possibilities you can't even imagine—and he is not troubled by any doubt about this principle.

Idealism was also a major mode of philosophy in the United States during the late nineteenth century. It had to compete with pragmatism—a competition personalized at Harvard from the 1880s until the death of William James (b. 1842) in 1910 by his friendly rivalry with Josiah Royce (1855–1916)—but while pragmatism remained prominent throughout the twentieth century, whether under that name or not, the reputation of idealism was permanently damaged by a movement toward "realism" early in the century (which also attacked pragmatism, although without the same effect). Earlier in the nineteenth century, the popular essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, the most philosophical of the New England "Transcendentalists," had struck many idealist themes, and after the Civil War a school of "St. Louis Hegelians" emerged, whose efforts were primarily exegetical. But the leading American idealist was Josiah Royce. Deeply influenced by the lectures Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) gave in Cambridge in 1898 (Royce was one of the first to earn a Ph.D. in philosophy at the new Johns Hopkins University in 1878, but that was one year before Peirce began

teaching logic there in 1879), Royce incorporated aspects of Peirce's pragmatism into his version of idealism, giving an idealist spin to Peirce's conception of truth as what would be known at the end of inquiry were that ever to be reached. But Royce's argument always remained that epistemology must ultimately lead to what he himself called metaphysical idealism. (See Flower and Murphey 1977; Kuklick 1977 and 1985; Clendenning 1999; Oppenheim 2005.)

A prolific author who published fifteen books before his early death at 60, Royce launched his defense of idealism in his first book, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (1885). In this work he introduced his first novel argument, for idealism, what he called the argument from error. Royce's claim is that skepticism begins with insistence upon the possibility of error, but that recognition of that possibility presupposes not just that *there is* "absolute truth" (1885: 385) but that in some sense we have to *know* that absolute truth, or at least some aspect of it, in order to have an object even for our erroneous claims: how could we ever know that we are wrong if we don't in some sense know what it is we are wrong about, or at least if *someone* or *something* does not know what it is we are wrong about? Thus we must have some access to a "higher inclusive thought" even to make an erroneous knowledge claim. In his words,

> Either then there is no error, or else judgments are true and false only in reference to a higher inclusive thought, which they presuppose, and which must, in the last analysis, be assumed as Infinite and all-inclusive.
>
> (1885: 393)

Royce holds that we must have some sort of apprehension of the "higher inclusive thought" in order to be able even to make our errors, and then that the growth of human knowledge over time consists in increasing apprehension of this all-inclusive truth without any limit being prescribed by our subordinate status. This is the epistemological optimism that pervades all Royce's work, including his subsequent debate with Bradley, to which we will return.

This account does not yet make clear why Royce thought that epistemology must lead to ontological idealism; that becomes clearer in his subsequent works. Royce's next major statement of his idealism came in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (1892). The second part of the book more fully develops Royce's own arguments for idealism. Here Royce gives a clear definition of his conception of idealism and adds to the previous argument from error a

second argument, from meaning. The core of this argument is that the intended object of an expression or thought must itself be conceived or understood in some way, so that we always mean what are in some sense our own ideas, although of course at any particular moment we hardly know or understand everything about the object to which we refer; that is why the idea that is the ultimate object of reference may be much greater than the idea that refers. In Royce's words,

> The self that is doubting or asserting, or that is even feeling its private ignorance about an object, and that still, even in consequence of all this, is *meaning*, is *aiming at* such an object, is in essence identical with the self for which this object exists in its complete and consciously known truth.
>
> (1892: 370–1)

By means of this argument, any restriction of Royce's position to a purely epistemological one is eliminated: the possibility of meaning requires an identity between what means and what is meant, and since anything might be meant, anything at all must in some way be identical with what means, subjects and their ideas and expressions, even though that identity can hardly be absolute, and the ordinary conscious subject may seem very different and more limited than the "*one* Self" (1892: 373) that underlies the appearances of both ordinary subjects and ordinary objects. This is the form that the characteristic idealist identification of being with thought takes in Royce.

Royce develops an even more systematic argument for an idealism that is both epistemological and ontological in his magnum opus, the two volumes of his 1899–1900 Gifford lectures published (1899 and 1901) as *The World and the Individual*. As the title suggests, a major theme of this work is explicating in detail the relationship between underlying reality and ordinary individual, conscious human selves. In this book, Royce expounds his idealism as the last of the four possible "conceptions of being." The first is the "realistic conception of Being," which is defined by the conception of being as completely *independent* of thought, so that whatever is true of it is true quite independently of what may be thought about it. This is the everyday conception of reality. The second conception of being is the mystical conception. As the defining notion of the realist conception was independence, the defining notion of mysticism is the opposite, namely immediacy, the idea that thought and its object must be one. This is idealism in its simplest form. The third conception of being, which Royce sometimes

calls the theory of "validity," is that "To be real now means, primarily, *to be valid, to be true, to be in essence the standard for ideas*" (1: 202). This conception of being tries to retain realism's recognition of independence through the thought that "some of my ideas are already, and apart from my private experience, valid, true, well-grounded" (1: 204) and mysticism's identification of subject and object through the thought that reality is itself possible experience, but adds structure to the now unified realms of thought and being instead of eliminating structure. It brings out the epistemology characteristic of much idealism.

The fourth conception of being, however, is a fuller development of the conception of meaning that Royce had introduced in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (1892). He now links meaning to *purpose*, and his thought is that the meaning of a term is an intended purpose, a problem to be solved, for example a mathematical problem to be solved or object to be constructed, and that in using a term the user already has some approach to solving the problem in mind but the full solution remains to be developed, may never be fully developed in the life of a particular individual, but is in some sense already included in the larger thought that constitutes reality. Reaching back to both Hegel and Kant—an idealist conception of purpose (*Zweck*) was after all the central and unifying concept of Kant's third *Critique*—Royce conceives of the progress of knowledge as making the meaning of our ideas more determinate. This development also displays the influence of Peirce and Royce's attempt to assimilate pragmatism into his version of idealism: his notion of meaning is clearly a version of Peirce's approach to truth, on which a proposition is true if it would be affirmed at the final stage of human inquiry, with the difference that while for Peirce the final stage of human inquiry is essentially a regulative ideal without ontological commitment, for Royce, the comprehensive meaning in which all ideas would be fully determinate is actually thought, although by a sort of super-self, not by any particular finite human self or even by all the selves thinking at any one time. Royce makes the transition from thought to being by stating that

> In its wholeness the world of Being is the world of individually expressed meanings, an individual life, consisting of the individual embodiments of the wills represented by all finite ideas. (1899–1901: 1: 341–2)

Royce's arguments for idealism, which in many ways return to the basic form of modern idealism pioneered by Green, whose *Prolegomena* had been published just a couple of years before Royce's own career began, collectively

illustrate the pressure that often forced a move from epistemology to an idealist ontology. The epistemological argument begins with the insight that our knowledge in some way or another always reflects the structure of our own consciousness and thought. But the difference between what any particular individual believes or even knows at any particular time and what may be true and be known as a whole, at a time or over time, is too great to ignore, and must be resolved. But once it has been assumed that thought or mind itself is the proper object of knowledge, the only way to do this is to make a contrast between individual thought and some sort of supra-individual thought.

Royce enjoyed polemics, for example with his pragmatist colleague and good friend James. He also gave a spirited defense of the definitely mental nature of the absolute in a polemic with his fellow idealist Bradley in a lengthy Supplementary Essay to the first volume of *The World and the Individual*, entitled "The One, the Many, and the Infinite" (Royce 1899–1901: 1: 473–588). The argument is long and intricate, and turns on Royce's recent and intensive studies of new developments in logic and the foundations of mathematics. But the gist of it (well summarized in Kuklick 1985a: 138–46), is that while in Bradley's view every relation of an object to a world ("R") generates a vicious infinite regress, for R itself must be related to the world by R*, and R* related to the world by R**, and so on, for Royce, drawing on Richard Dedekind's explication of how the infinite series of all natural numbers can represent other infinite number series (of primes, of the powers of 3, etc.), or vice versa, mind, at least mind capacious enough, can represent these relations without contradiction or vicious regress. As Kuklick puts it, "while Bradley holds [the 'actual infinite'] to be self-contradictory," for Royce the essence of mind is to be "Self-Representative" (Kuklick 1985a: 140), to be able to represent itself, that is, its representations, through its own representations—just as long as this mind is capacious and complex enough. That is why the mind must be absolute, and the absolute must be mind—not just this mind or that, often enough not able to quite grasp Dedekind's treatment of infinites, let alone Royce's metaphysical application of it, but absolute mind.

At the outset of modern idealism, in Berkeley, the mind in question takes the form of the infinite mind, God, contrasted to individual, human minds; in later forms, such as those of Green and Royce, the supra-individual mind is not always identified with God, but plays the same role. In the cases of both Green and Royce, the union of epistemology and ontology also provided the basis for a moral idealism based on an insistence upon the

underlying commonality of individual human selves in the larger self that Royce called the Absolute. But we will not be able to trace that line of thought here, and will instead conclude with the suggestion that many subsequent philosophers drew back from the full-blooded idealism offered by Green, Bradley, McTaggart, and Royce in favor of what was supposed to be an ontological realism, but which nevertheless continued to harbor at least epistemological traces of idealism. This might seem a surprising claim, since the immediate response both to the British idealists and to Royce in the US came from philosophers who identified themselves as realists. A case in point would be Bertrand Russell. Before we turn to Russell, however, we will pause for a look at Charles Sanders Peirce, who, as already suggested, had a considerable influence on the later work of Royce.

Whereas Royce was convinced that epistemology must ultimately lead to metaphysical idealism, Peirce was led in his philosophical development from metaphysical realism to metaphysical idealism while supporting all the way what has here been characterized as an epistemological ground for idealism. Peirce, the most original American philosopher of his era, perhaps of any, was the son of the Harvard mathematician Benjamin Peirce, who essentially founded the Harvard mathematics department and did found the US Coast and Geodetic Survey, which would be the son's primary employment from 1859 to 1891. Charles Sanders Peirce also taught logic in the mathematics department of the newly founded Johns Hopkins University from 1879 to 1884, but was fired from that post because he had the temerity to begin residence with the woman who would become his second wife before his divorce from his first wife had been finalized, and was never able to get another academic position. He thus had to remain an employee of Coast and Geodetic Survey, and then lived his final years in independent but dire circumstances, supported in part by subscription lecture series that William James arranged for him to give in Cambridge. Although he was highly recognized and even supported by many of his academically much more successful philosophical contemporaries, among them Royce and James, and although he produced an impressive amount of writing (the Peirce Edition Project that is in charge of publishing his writings will, if ever finished, contain more than twenty volumes), he never succeeded in elaborating his ideas in book form. Instead he published most of his work in intellectual and learned journals (*Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Journal of Speculative Philosophy, The Nation, Popular Science, The Monist, The Open Court*) and encyclopedias (Baldwin's *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia*). There are also quite a number of

manuscripts he wrote for different lecture series but never published. They comprise the early Harvard lectures on *The Logic of Science* (1865) and the early Lowell Lectures on the same topic (1866) as well as the Cambridge Lectures on *Reasoning and the Logic of Things* (1898) and the later Harvard lectures on *Pragmatism* (1903). (On Peirce, see Murphey 1961; Passmore 1966: 136–44; Flower and Murphey 1977; Kuklick 1977.)

Peirce's metaphysical views are intimately connected with his claim "that logic is the science of representations in general, whether mental or material" (*CE* 1: 169) and with his stipulations concerning the structure and status of what he calls "representation." In his early writings, while trying to answer the question as to the grounds of the objective validity of synthetic inferences (a question which he takes to be at the center of Kant's theoretical philosophy), he develops a notion of representation according to which

> [A] representation is anything which is supposed to stand for another and which might express that other to a mind which truly could understand it. (*CE* 1: 257)

This characterization of a representation is supposed to make the representation "mind-independent," so to speak:

> instead of being restricted to something within the mind, [the representation] is extended to things which do not even address the mind. (*CE* 1: 323)

Peirce might have come to this conception of a representation by relying on a phenomenological analysis of what he takes to be constitutive of every experience. For him

> experience has three determinations—three different references to a substratum or substrata, lying behind it and determining it. (*CE* 1: 168)

This is so because every experience is determined (1) by an external object, (2) by our soul, and (3) by "the idea of a universal mind" (an "archetypal idea"). Within representations he distinguishes in the early writings between a copy ("a representation whose agreement with its object depends merely upon sameness of predicates," *CE* 1: 257), a sign ("a representation whose reference to its object is fixed by convention," *CE* 1: 257), and a symbol ("a representation whose correspondence with its object is of the same

immaterial kind as a sign but is founded nevertheless in its very nature," *CE* 1: 323). Later he changed the terminology and used instead of "copy" and "sign" the terms "Icon" and "Index," which led to his better-known distinction between Icon, Index, and Symbol as different kinds of representations. Each of these different kinds is determined by a difference in its way of denoting and/or connoting its object while all of them share the characteristics of having to have (1) a relation to an object (2) under a specific form (e.g., similarity, by convention) and (3) a relation to an interpretant, that is, to a "consciousness" (cf. *CE* 1: 272f.). From his analysis of the nature of a representation Peirce draws the metaphysical conclusion that "[w]hatever is is a representation" (*CE* 1: 324) or "all is representation" (*CE* 1: 326). He arrives at this conclusion in a somewhat obscure way that seems to be based on the conviction that everything there is represents itself or is a representation of itself *under an interpretation*. Peirce does not immediately recognize his position as a form of idealism. Rather, because representations are neutral with respect to their status of being material or mental he can think of material objects as representations whose interpretant is either the representation itself or some (non-human) consciousness for which the representation can function as a symbol, and he can think of mental items like general terms or concepts as universals that exist "out there" in a world that comprises in addition to copies and conventional signs what he calls ideas (cf. *CE* 1: 168). However, it is obvious that this view commits Peirce to a position that implies the (metaphysical) reality of universals, a position that he explicitly and happily endorses (cf. *CE* 1: 358ff.). And the very fact that every representation has both a denotative and a connotative function makes the basic epistemological premise for idealism, namely the necessary isomorphism between knowledge and the known, an element of his view.

Whereas in his earlier writings Peirce is very explicit about the metaphysical implications of his representational position, he is reluctant to go into metaphysical discussions in his later writings, where he is primarily concerned with formulating and defending his conception of Pragmatism. Instead he urges that his Pragmatism is not a metaphysical doctrine and is in fact metaphysically neutral. In a draft of a popular article on Pragmatism (1907), never published in his lifetime, he writes

> that pragmatism is, in itself, no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts. (*EP* 2: 400)

As we will see, the effort to accept much of the epistemology of idealism but to reject its metaphysics would also be characteristic of the nearly contemporaneous Neo-Kantian movement in Germany, and through the influence of that along with the influence of pragmatism of much subsequent analytic philosophy.

He proclaims, most unambiguously in his Harvard lectures on *Pragmatism* (1903), that one can establish Pragmatism as a methodological maxim on the basis of epistemological (in later years: semiotic) considerations that have to start from a phenomenological analysis of experience. To provide this analysis is the task of what he calls Phenomenology (with Peirce's capital "P," used explicitly in allusion to Hegel, cf. *EP* 2: 143f.) which is in Peirce's taxonomy the first of the main branches of philosophy because on it rest what he takes to be the other branches of philosophy, that is, normative science and metaphysics (cf. *EP* 2: 146f.). Phenomenology is the discipline

> whose task is to make out what are the elements of appearance that present themselves to us every hour and every minute whether we are pursuing earnest investigations, or are undergoing the strangest vicissitudes of experience, or are dreamily listening to the tales of Scheherazade.
>
> (*EP* 2: 147)

According to Peirce, phenomenological considerations, that is, considerations spelled out in the Phenomenology, show that in whatever can be experienced there are at least two distinct series of categories involved that make this experience possible. Some of them are universal, that is, are constitutive of every phenomenon, others particular, that is, they belong to a phenomenon if looked at under a specific aspect (cf. *EP* 2: 148) like its quantitative, qualitative, relational, etc. determinations. As universal categories he identifies three which he names Firstness/Category the First/First, Secondness/Category the Second/Second, and Thirdness/Category the Third/Third respectively. He defines them thus:

> Category the First is the Idea of that which is such as it is regardless of anything else. That is to say, it is a *Quality* of Feeling. Category the Second is the Idea of that which is such as it is as being Second to some First, regardless of anything else and in particular regardless of any *law*, although it may conform to a law. That is to say, it is *Reaction* as an element of the Phenomenon. Category the Third is the Idea of that which is such as it is as

> being a Third, or Medium, between a Second and its First. That is to say, it is *Representation* as an element of the Phenomenon. (*EP* 2: 160)

These definitions are meant to capture what is essential to every phenomenon. They are interpreted in more familiar terms by Peirce as attributing to every phenomenon the characteristics of presentness or immediacy (Firstness), struggle or resistance (Secondness), and what may be described as general openness to conceptual interpretation (Thirdness) as fundamental and irreducible features. Peirce is ready to credit Hegel with a similar view ("I consider Hegel's three stages as being, roughly speaking, the correct list of Universal Categories," *EP* 2:148). However, he criticizes Hegel for mistakenly not allowing these categories to be independent of each other. He believes that the reason for this failure on Hegel's part lies in his being

> possessed with the idea that the Absolute is One.... Consequently, he wishes to make out that the three categories have not their several independent and irrefutable standings in thought. Firstness and Secondness must somehow be *aufgehoben*. (*EP* 2: 177)

Although this criticism might be justified from a Peircean phenomenological point of view it poses at the same time a problem for him because he now has to give an account of how the professed independence of his universal categories can be integrated into his general representational picture of reality, a picture according to which everything that is real has to have the character of Thirdness and therefore is somehow related to everything else in virtue of its interpretative or representational character, that is, in virtue of its status as an interpretant.

It looks here as if Peirce needs something like Royce's ideas that ultimate reality is self-interpreting mind, and indeed in his later years (after *c.*1905) he tried to solve this problem by giving his phenomenological claims a metaphysical underpinning. For him metaphysics is that part of philosophy that gives an account of the *results* of what philosophy in the form of Phenomenology and as a normative science has accomplished. Here Peirce exploits the fundamental idealist premise that there is a necessary isomorphism between thought and being: according to him,

> [m]etaphysics consists in the results of the absolute acceptance of logical principles not merely as regulatively valid, but as truths of being. Accordingly, it is to be assumed that the universe has an explanation, the

> function of which, like that of every logical explanation, is to unify its observed variety. It follows that the root of all being is One; and so far as different subjects have a common character they partake of an identical being. This, or something like this, is the monadic clause of the law. Second, drawing a general induction from all observed facts, we find all realization of existence lies in opposition, such as attractions, repulsions, visibilities, and centres of potentiality generally . . . This is, or is a part of, a dyadic clause of the law. Under the third clause, we have, as a deduction from the principle that thought is the mirror of being, the law that the end of being and highest reality is the living impersonation of the idea that evolution generates. (*CP* 1: 487)

The term "law" in this characterization is equivalent to what he terms "regularity" "in the universe of *representations*" (cf. *CP* 1: 480). The specific version of metaphysics he is advocating shows up in his writings in the shape of what he calls his doctrine of *Synechism*. He defines Synechism as

> that tendency of philosophical thought which insists upon the idea of continuity as of prime importance in philosophy and, in particular, upon the necessity of hypotheses involving true continuity. (*CP* 6: 169)

This synechistic doctrine, he declares,

> gives room for explanations of many facts which without it are absolutely and hopelessly inexplicable; and further that it carries along with it the following doctrines: first, a logical realism of the most pronounced type; second, objective idealism; third, tychism, with its consequent thoroughgoing evolutionism. We also notice that the doctrine presents no hindrances to spiritual influences, such as some philosophies are felt to do. (*CP* 6: 163)

Tychism "or the doctrine that absolute chance is a factor of the universe" (*CP* 6: 201) he takes to be an essential element of synechistic philosophy because it

> must give birth to an evolutionary cosmology, in which all the regularities of nature and of mind are regarded as products of growth, and to a Schelling-fashioned idealism which holds matter to be mere specialized and partially deadened mind. (*CP* 5: 102)

Peirce's "tychism" introduces an element of chance into the ultimate reality of the universe which neither Bradley nor Royce recognized, and that might well seem a healthy idea. Nevertheless, like them he is committed to objective idealism as well as to logical realism because of his view that (to use a phrase favored very much by Bradley) "in the end" everything there is is a representation. It is within this synechistic framework based on tychism that, according to Peirce, the independence of Firstness and Secondness can be shown to be a necessary condition for Thirdness. This is so because continuity (which he identifies with Thirdness) and chance (as the organizing principle of evolution) could not be accounted for if there were no independence of the three universal categories. He is very explicit about this connection between his metaphysical and his representational views when he writes:

> Permit me further to say that I object to having my metaphysical system as a whole called Tychism. For although tychism does enter into it, it only enters as subsidiary to that which is really, as I regard it, the characteristic of my doctrine, namely, that I chiefly insist upon continuity, or Thirdness, and, in order to secure to Thirdness its really commanding function, I find it indispensable fully [to] recognize that it is a third, and that Firstness, or chance, and Secondness, or Brute reaction, are other elements, without the independence of which Thirdness would not have anything upon which to operate. Accordingly, I like to call my theory Synechism, because it rests on the study of continuity. (*CP* 6: 202)

In virtue of the robust idealistic elements contained in his synechism it is safe to say that Peirce's final philosophy exhibits most of the traits that are characteristic of metaphysical idealism prevalent in Anglo-American philosophy at the turn of the twentieth century. So while Royce tried to assimilate Peirce's pragmatism into his own idealism, Peirce himself was turning his pragmatism into a form of idealism (in which William James, for example, would not follow him, perhaps one reason why Peirce ultimately adopted the barbarism "Pragmaticism" in the hope of distinguishing his position from what had become popular as James's "Pragmatism").

8
The Rejection of British Idealism

Idealism and all the arguments for it came under massive attack in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century by George Edward Moore (1873–1958) and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), while in the United States Royce's position was attacked by a school of younger "New Realists," to some extent inspired by his lifelong interlocutor William James, who included E. B. Holt and his younger Harvard colleague Ralph Barton Perry, and later Roy Wood Sellars (the father of Wilfrid Sellars, who later moved back to a form of Kantianism), and Arthur Lovejoy. Both Moore and Russell had more of an enduring influence on the course of analytic philosophy than did the American New Realists. But they also reveal the continuing impulse to idealism in spite of their own efforts, so we will focus on them. Both of them take idealism to be spiritualism in the vein of Berkeley and Bradley (neither of them mentions their own Cambridge tutor McTaggart, perhaps because his main work was not published until several decades after their attack on Bradley), that is, they think of idealism as a position characterized by the claim that the universe (Moore) or whatever exists or whatever can be known to exist (Russell) is spiritual (Moore) or in some sense mental (Russell). Although their attack was so influential that even more than a hundred years later, any acknowledgment of idealistic tendencies is viewed in the English-speaking world with reservation, it is by no means obvious that they actually thought they had disproved idealism. On the contrary, neither Moore nor Russell claimed to have demonstrated that the universe or what exists or can be known to exist is not spiritual or mental. All that they take themselves to have shown is that there are no good philosophical (in contradistinction to, e.g., theological or psychological) arguments available to support such a claim. Moore especially is very explicit about this point. He devotes the first five pages of his famous piece *The Refutation of Idealism* from 1903 to assuring the reader over and over that

> I do not suppose that anything I shall say has the smallest tendency to prove that reality is not spiritual .... Reality may be spiritual, for all I know; and I devoutly hope it is .... It is, therefore, only with idealistic *arguments*

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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> that I am concerned; . . . I shall have proved that Idealists have *no reason whatever* for their conclusion. (*Philosophical Studies* 2f.)

And Russell in his *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912), in a similar vein, warns the reader, after emphasizing the strangeness of an idealistic position from a common-sense point of view:

> [I]f there were good reasons to regard them [viz. physical objects] as mental, we could not legitimately reject this opinion merely because it strikes us as strange. (1912 [1974: 38])

Moore and Russell found two main arguments for idealism to be fallacious. The first depends on Berkeley's idealistic principle that being consists in being perceived, the second on the converse claim, attributed to Bradley, that thought entails being. Their criticism of the first as well as their rebuttal of the second argument both stem from certain convictions about the nature of knowledge that they share. The assault on Berkeley is staged by Moore most extensively in *The Refutation of Idealism* (1903). Here he holds that if there is an argument to prove the idealistic claim that the universe is spiritual (1903: 433) then this reasoning must rely either at the beginning or at some point later in the argument on the premise *esse est percipi*:

> I believe that every argument ever used to show that reality is spiritual has inferred this (validly or invalidly) from "*esse* is *percipere*" as one of its premisses; and that this again has never been pretended to be proved except by use of the premiss that *esse* is *percipi*. (1903: 437)

According to Moore the proposition *esse est percipi* "does *at least* assert that whatever is, is *experienced*" (1903: 437) which is meant in turn to assert

> that wherever you have *x* [*esse*] you also have *percipi*; that whatever has the property *x* also has the property that it is *experienced*. (1903: 440)

After a lengthy analysis of this proposition he points out that the conception of the connection between an experience and what is experienced that the idealist is entertaining has tenuous consequences that give rise to the question:

> if we never experience anything but what is not an inseparable aspect of *that* experience, how can we infer that anything whatever, let alone *everything* is an inseparable aspect of *any* experience? (1903: 451)

An inference to such a conclusion cannot be justified. He concludes that in order to avoid an idealistic position one is better off endorsing a view according to which

> I am as directly aware of the existence of material things in space as of my own sensations, and *what* I am aware of with regard to each is exactly the same—namely that in one case the material thing, and in the other case my sensation does really exist. (1903: 453)

This line of reasoning, remarkably similar to what Kant had argued in the Fourth Antinomy in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* but rejected as an inadequate refutation of idealism in the second edition, was picked up in an abbreviated form by Russell ten years later in the chapter on idealism in his *The Problems of Philosophy*, while the attack on Bradley, although foreshadowed in Russell's *Problems*, is spelled out rather lengthily (and a bit nastily) by Moore in "The Conception of Reality" from 1917–18. Their main objection against the two idealistic arguments seems to be that they rely on unjustly presupposing that the mental act of relating to an object (perceiving, thinking, knowing, experiencing) is a necessary condition for the existence of this object. The fallacy involved here consists in failing to make "the distinction between act and object in our apprehending of things," as Russell (1912 [1974: 42]) puts it, or, in Moore's terminology of "The Refutation", in wrongfully identifying the content of "consciousness" with its object (1912 [1974: 19ff.]). As soon as this identification is given up and that distinction is made it is at least an open question whether things exist independently of the mind, and idealism *insofar as it neglects this distinction and holds fast to that identification* is refuted because it is based on an invalid argument.

Whether this line of criticism of idealistic positions is indeed successful might be controversial, and even if it strikes home against Berkeley the charge that they simply conflate knowledge and object hardly seems to do justice to the elaborate arguments of the late nineteenth-century idealists. However, if one is convinced of the correctness of this criticism (as no doubt Moore and Russell were) then it makes way for interesting new perspectives in epistemology and metaphysics. This is so because if this criticism is taken

to be successful it permits us to explore the possibility of a theory of knowledge that starts from the assumptions (a) that objects exist independently of us and (b) that to know an object means to be immediately related to the object as it is in itself (i.e., as it is undistorted by and independent of any mental activity). Both Moore and Russell can be understood to have embarked on this exploration in the course of which they came to conceive a position which is aptly called by Peter Hylton "Platonic Atomism" (2013: 329).

The basic idea of this Platonic atomism seems to be the following: Knowledge consists in standing in an immediate relation to an independent individual object (assumption b). This immediate relation to individual objects is best known under Russell's term "acquaintance." If, by stipulation, knowledge is ultimately knowledge "by acquaintance," then knowledge is restricted to knowledge of individual objects. Knowledge basically is knowledge *of* something or non-propositional knowledge. However, although this rather frugal conception of knowledge might be sufficient to give an account of the possibility of non-propositional knowledge, it is not that easy to see how such a conception can give a sensible explanation of propositional knowledge, that is, of knowledge *that* something is so-and-so. Moore and Russell seem to have been acutely aware of this difficulty as is documented in their very explicit efforts to avoid it. It might have been their different reactions to this difficulty which in the years to come led them to proceed on diverging routes in philosophy. As is easy to imagine, there are two obvious reactions to the problem of propositional knowledge provided that assumption (b) is agreed upon. The first is to claim that propositions (Moore prefers the term "judgment" in this context) are individual objects with which the subject is acquainted (if he or she claims to know *that* something is so-and-so). The second is to broaden the concept of knowledge by not restricting knowledge to knowledge by acquaintance but to allow for other forms of *knowledge* as well. The first reaction apparently was the reaction of Moore and is formulated most prominently in his early piece "The Nature of Judgment" (1899), while the second can be attributed to Russell and is documented most vividly in his *The Problems of Philosophy*.

According to Moore a proposition is composed out of concepts. If we are to be acquainted with propositions we have to take their elements, that is, concepts, to have independent existence (because of assumption a). Moore points out:

> . . . we have approached the nature of a proposition or judgment. A proposition is composed not of words, nor yet of thoughts, but of

> concepts. Concepts are possible objects of thought; but that is no definition of them. It merely states that they may come into relation with a thinker; and in order that they *may* do anything, they must already *be* something. It is indifferent to their nature whether anyone thinks them or not. They are incapable of change; and the relation into which they enter with the knowing subject implies no action or reaction. It is a unique relation which can begin to cease with a change in the subject; but the concept is neither cause nor effect of such a change. The occurrence of the relation has, no doubt, its causes and effects, but these are to be found only in the subject. (1899: para. 9)

Moore is well aware that this analysis of the nature of a proposition leads to some version of what could be called "conceptual realism," according to which that what is "really" real are concepts because they are the ultimate objects of acquaintance. He explicitly states:

> It would seem, in fact, . . . that a proposition is nothing other than a complex concept. The difference between a concept and a proposition, in virtue of which the latter alone can be called true or false, would seem to lie merely in the simplicity of the former. A proposition is a synthesis of concepts; and, just as concepts are themselves immutably what they are, so they stand in infinite relations to one another equally immutable. A proposition is constituted by any number of concepts, together with a specific relation between them; and according to the nature of this relation the proposition may be either true or false. What kind of relation makes a proposition true, what false, cannot be further defined, but must be immediately recognized. (1899: para. 12)

Moore also is very well aware that his view of the nature of concepts commits him to the claim that the world *insofar as it is an object of propositional knowledge* consists of concepts because these are the only things one can be acquainted with if acquaintance is a condition of knowledge. Thus he writes:

> It seems necessary, then, to regard the world as formed of concepts. These are the only objects of knowledge. They cannot be regarded fundamentally as abstractions either from things or from ideas; since both alike can be, if anything is to be true of them, composed of nothing but concepts. A thing becomes intelligible first when it is analyzed into its constituent concepts.

> The material diversity of things, which is generally taken as starting-point, is only derived; and the identity of the concept, in several different things, which appears on that assumption as the problem of philosophy, will now, if it instead be taken as the starting-point, render the derivation easy. Two things are then seen to be differentiated by the different relations in which their common concepts stand to other concepts. The opposition of concepts to existents disappears, since an existent is seen to be nothing but a concept or complex of concepts standing in a unique relation to the concept of existence." (1899: para. 16).

Moore confesses that "I am fully aware of how paradoxical this theory must appear, and even how contemptible" (1899: para. 14). And indeed one wonders whether such an account does not raise more problems than it answers. Fortunately we do not have to be concerned with this question here. However, if we ask whether Moore's theory really manages to avoid idealism, it is hard not to conclude that its metaphysical commitments are precisely a form of idealism, even if he has been led to his theory by an attempt to maintain epistemological realism! After all, to claim that only concepts are real, that they have a mode of being outside of space and time, that they are non-physical and completely unaffected by any activity of a thinking subject, does not sound very different from statements that can rightly be attributed to, for example, Hegel, or even ultimately Plato, and that are meant to assert idealism. The main difference in this case is that Moore's conception of what a concept is has virtually nothing to do with what Hegel means by "concept," but this does not suffice to establish ontological anti-idealism. Although Moore might avoid identifying concepts with the mental states of particular, finite subjects by his insistence upon the metaphysical independence of concepts, many avowed idealists had also done that. Moore comes dangerously close to the point where the difference between ontological idealism and ontological realism vanishes and this distinction becomes a question of terminology.

Russell chooses a different path in the attempt to somehow reconcile the idea that knowledge has to be understood as a relation of acquaintance with objects with the phenomenon of propositional knowledge. He is more flexible both with respect to kinds of knowledge and with respect to kinds of objects with which we can be acquainted than Moore is. First of all, he distinguishes between knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. He recognizes two kinds of knowledge of things: knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. Knowledge by acquaintance obtains whenever

> we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths. (1912 [1974: 46])

Knowledge by (definite) description obtains

> when we know that it [i.e., the object] is "the so-and-so", i.e., when we know that there is one object, and no more, having a certain property. (1912 [1974: 53])

The relation between these two kinds of knowledge is the following:

> [K]nowledge concerning what is known by description is ultimately reducible to knowledge concerning what is known by acquaintance.
> (1912 [1974: 58])

Knowledge of *truths* is distinguished from these two kinds of knowledge of *things*. Knowledge of truths consists in pieces of knowledge that although they cannot be proven by experience are such that we nevertheless "see" their truth (1912 [1974: 74]). Examples of truths that can be known this way are logical principles, the principle of induction, and everything we know a priori. This taxonomy of kinds of knowledge, Russell believes, can account both for the possibility of non-propositional and propositional knowledge and at the same time retain the claim as to the primacy of the acquaintance-relation for knowledge.

The obvious question now is: If all knowledge is ultimately based on acquaintance, what is it that we can be acquainted with, that is, what are the legitimate objects of acquaintance? Because, according to Russell, the acquaintance relation is a relation to individual things, this question translates into "what are the individual things we can be acquainted with?" Russell's answer to this question is that there are exactly two kinds of things we can be acquainted with, namely particulars, that is, things that exist, and universals, that is, things that subsist (cf. 1912 [1974: 100]). Particulars comprise sense-data, thoughts, feelings, desires and memories of "things which have been data either of the outer senses or of the inner sense" (1912 [1974: 51]). Universals are

> opposed to the particular things that are given in sensation. We speak of whatever is given in sensation, or is of the same nature as things given in

> sensation, as a *particular*; by opposition to this, a *universal* will be anything which may be shared by many particulars. (1912 [1974: 93])

Universals are conceptual entities: "These entities are such as can be named by parts of speech which are not substantives; they are such entities as qualities or relations" (1912 [1974: 90]). Because universals and particulars alike are possible objects of acquaintance both have to be real. However, according to Russell they are real in a different sense. Particulars have existence in time whereas universals have timeless being. The first ones exist, the others subsist. They form two different worlds in that the world of particulars consists of items that are "fleeting, vague, without sharp boundaries" whereas the world of universals "is unchangeable, rigid, exact" (1912 [1974: 100]). The echo of Plato is unmistakable.

This rough outline of Russell's epistemic universe is meant to emphasize only those aspects of his position that are of relevance for an assessment of idealistic tendencies in his approach to knowledge. As in the case of Moore, it is tempting to interpret Russell's commitment to a timeless world of universals as if not an endorsement then at least tolerance of a position that is difficult to distinguish from some version of an ontologically grounded idealism. Perhaps such a verdict is not very significant because one could as well describe this position as a version of ontological realism. It just depends on what the distinctive feature of idealism is supposed to be. If idealism is a position that takes for granted the reality of conceptual entities even if it does not hold them to be mind dependent, at least not dependent on particular, ordinary minds, then both Moore and Russell endorse it. If idealism is meant to be a position that takes conceptual items to be mind dependent, that is, dependent on particular minds, then both are realists rather than idealists with respect to concepts. Either way, it is hard to see how Russell can avoid the epistemological path to idealism given his views about physical objects. This is so because of his sense-datum theory, according to which what is immediately present to us, that is, what we are acquainted with when we are acquainted with particulars, are just sense-data and not objects in the sense of individual things with qualities standing in relations to each other. For him "among the objects with which we are acquainted are not included physical objects (as opposed to sense-data)" (1912 [1974: 52]). Physical objects are constructions that we form out of sense-data together with some descriptive devices, and only with respect to these constructions can we have knowledge by description, that is, propositional knowledge. If idealism is understood (as has been done here) as

involving the claim that what we take to be objects of knowledge are heavily dependent on some activity of the knowing subject, then the very idea of an object as a construction guarantees the endorsement of idealism. Thus, in contrast to their self-proclaimed revolt against the idealism of Berkeley and Bradley, the positions of both Moore and Russell are by no means free of traits that connect them rather closely to well-known currents in modern idealism; and these features, above all the supposition that knowers may be immediately presented with some sorts of informational atoms, whether properties, sense-data, or whatever, but that all further knowledge, or all knowledge beyond immediate acquaintance, involves constructive activities of the mind, are common throughout a great deal of recent philosophy.

9

The German Response to Idealism II

Neo-Kantianism without Idealism

Insofar as it began with Moore and Russell's supposed revolt against Bradley, mainstream analytical British philosophy has been taken to be opposed to idealism. But we have just seen that their own views were in some ways difficult to distinguish from the idealism they allegedly rejected. Ironically, the dominant movement in German philosophy from the 1870s to World War I, the period that saw both the flowering of British idealism and the supposed revolt against it, although it began with the cry "Back to Kant!" (Liebmann 1865) and has always been known as Neo-Kantianism, abjured metaphysical speculation altogether, and more thoroughly eliminated metaphysical grounds for idealism than did the British philosophers. It did this even while it fully accepted and amplified the Kantian premise that our *experience* of reality is always structured by the distinctive features of *human* mentality. In many ways this line of thought, the epistemological grounds for idealism, would be more influential on the subsequent course of analytical philosophy than the particular views of its presumed founders Moore and Russell would be. With the exception of those of the last great Neo-Kantian, Ernst Cassirer, most of the main works of the German Neo-Kantians, whether the leaders of the "Heidelberg" or "Southwest School," Wilhelm Windelband, or the "Marburg" school, Herman Cohen and Paul Natorp, both teachers of Cassirer, have not been translated into English at all or were translated only long after their original publication; the influence of Neo-Kantianism on analytic philosophy was rather through the work of such émigré figures as Rudolf Carnap and Hans Reichenbach (see Friedman 2000). These philosophers were received in the US as ambassadors of the so-called Vienna Circle and did not identify themselves as Neo-Kantians once in the US, so analytic philosophy in the US became largely ignorant of its own roots in Neo-Kantianism. We will not have space in the present work to rectify this ignorance to any large degree, but will focus on a few of the German Neo-Kantians and their effort to free Kantianism from metaphysics and therefore from idealism proper.

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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The decline of interest in idealist metaphysics during late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany had to do primarily with a certain aversion against what was taken to have been an excessive and extravagant usurpation of all fields of intellectual discourse by the classical German philosophers under the pretext of idealism. This line of criticism was initially voiced most forcefully by influential natural scientists such as Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–94; see Hatfield 1991; Hyder 2009; Schiemann 2009; Beiser 2011). But the marginalization of idealism in these years was an avowed goal of Neo-Kantianism in both its Marburg and Southwest forms, which are not always so easy to tell apart as this common distinction might suggest. Although it was a reaction mainly to absolute idealism, Neo-Kantianism accepted the epistemological outlook of the kind that had traditionally led to idealism—that is why it was called Neo-Kantianism, after all. This did not fail to be noticed, and Martin Heidegger's later version of realism, in which we are supposed to simply open ourselves up to truth (*aletheia* in Heidegger's preferred Greek terminology) can be interpreted as a response to the survival of idealism as epistemology in Neo-Kantianism. This will also lie beyond the bounds of the present narrative (but see Gordon 2010).

In the immediate aftermath of Hegel, idealist conclusions based on metaphysical and/or epistemological arguments could still be found in the works of some of the then better-known philosophers. In particular, the writings of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg (1802–72) and Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817–81) are documents of a lasting influence of idealistic figures and practices of thought, as was highlighted in detail by Beiser (2014b). Trendelenburg's interpretation of his central concept of motion (*Bewegung*) and Lotze's vindication of his theory of value (*Wert*) reveal quite tellingly their efforts to preserve essential idealistic features of both Hegel's metaphysics (Trendelenburg) and Kant's epistemology (Lotze). During this period there were still active right (old) and left (new) Hegelians who were either critically or apologetically committed to a broadly Hegelian or idealistic framework in philosophy, as well as others who sympathized with certain aspects of Hegel's philosophy but did not identify as either left or right Hegelians. All these voices had some impact on philosophical discussions mainly about religion, for example, Immanuel Hermann Fichte (the son of Johann) and Christian Hermann Weisse, and politics, for example, Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Friedrich Strauss. Karl Marx and his eventual followers were outspoken opponents of an idealism in Hegel's sense, but their anti-idealism did not stop them from entertaining

idealist notions of the development of history or the unavoidability of social progress, with eventually profound consequences for twentieth-century history.

But the main thrust of Neo-Kantianism at its height was a combination of the fundamental epistemological motivation for idealism with a rejection of idealist metaphysics; in accepting material reality and rejecting the reduction of all reality to anything mental or spiritual, the Neo-Kantians were attempting to do justice to the extraordinary development of modern science in Germany (and of course in contemporary Britain as well), while making room for the irreducibly mental nature of the human experience of the world. This dualism made itself felt in various ways: in the contrast between *Erklären* and *Verstehen*, or "explanation" and "understanding" in the work of the Berlin philosopher (and initiator of the Academy edition of the works of Kant) Wilhelm Dilthey; in the distinction between *Geltung* and *Wert*, or "validity" and "value" in the work of the Southwest Neo-Kantians; and in the various forms of the distinction between the "natural" and "human" sciences, distinguished as the "nomothetic" and "idiographic" sciences, or sciences of lawlike generalization and sciences of individualized description, of Windelband and Rickert, or as the "natural" and "cultural sciences" (language, myth, religion, history, art, law, etc.) by Cassirer. The fundamental distinction beneath all these terms is that of the description of nature, including the nature of human beings and their behavior, as objects ontologically distinct from our representations of them, and the description of ourselves and our cultural products in terms of our experience of them—but always with the recognition that in both cases the fundamental forms, structures, or "logic" of the description, whether nomothetic or idiographic, for example, is in fact furnished by the human mind. We can turn our descriptive powers on the world, or on ourselves, but the categories are always our own. This is of course the fundamental lesson of Kant, thus of Neo-Kantianism, although the Neo-Kantians rejected the idea that beyond our description of nature and ourselves within the framework of the categories it also makes sense to refer to things in themselves as having their own nature even if we cannot know anything more about them than that they exist. The concept of the thing in itself would be repurposed by the Neo-Kantians to mean something more like what we would know if only we ever had a complete picture of reality, thus something that differs from our knowledge in completeness and degree but not in kind—something indeed closer in spirit to Peirce's conception of what would be known at the end of inquiry if there were ever such an end, but less close to Royce's conception of

what is already known not by our minds but by absolute mind. We can also suggest that the distinction between the use of our own categories to frame our comprehensive science of nature and our various sciences of our own experience is also heir to Kant's distinction between the theoretical and practical standpoints, although without Kant's commitment to a radical or libertarian conception of free will—another metaphysical commitment that the Neo-Kantians stayed away from, along with any speculation about the nature of an ontologically independent thing in itself. This is particularly clear in the Southwest version of Neo-Kantianism, where the subjective or internal point of view is characterized in terms not only of consciousness but also of *values* (*Werte*), although typically multiple values rather than the single value of morality or virtue. This connection is hinted at in the title of Heinrich Rickert's 1924 book *Kant als Philosoph der modernen Kultur* ("Kant as Philosopher of Modern Culture"). One last hint we might throw out here is that the Neo-Kantian view of the logic of natural science has been more influential in the history of analytic philosophy than their recognition of the human or cultural sciences, although some positions in analytical philosophy, such as non-reductive materialism, the view that all that exists is ultimately material but that the nature of consciousness and thought cannot be described in physicalistic terms (e.g., the "anomalous monism" of Donald Davidson), echo the Neo-Kantian distinction between the natural and the human sciences.

We can only give some illustrations of these general points here. We can start with some ideas from Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1914), the elder statesman of the Southwest school—he was born in Potsdam, studied in Göttingen with Lotze, and taught briefly at Zürich, none of which were of course in southwestern Germany, but his main positions were at Freiburg in Breisgau (1877–82), Strassburg (1882–1903), and then Heidelberg, all of which were at that time (Strassburg became French again after World War I), thus the name of the school. At Freiburg he would teach and be succeeded by Heinrich Rickert, and Edmund Husserl and then Martin Heidegger would follow there—that would be the end of Southwest Neo-Kantianism. Windelband perhaps remains best known as a historian of philosophy—his problem-oriented textbook remained in print for decades—but he published numerous theoretical and programmatic papers as well, many collected in *Präludien*, a volume originally published in 1884 and expanded in further editions throughout the rest of Windelband's life. One of Windelband's earlier philosophical articles, "Critical or Genetic Method?" from 1883, starts from a premise that he basically shares with Herman Cohen and the

following Marburg school, and that differentiates Neo-Kantianism from the first wave of response to Kant that led to idealism, namely the idea of deducing everything in philosophy from a single principle or concept, such as the idea of consciousness in Fichte or of being itself in Hegel's dialectical logic. This is the view that philosophy must begin from some norms of thought, perhaps multiple norms for multiple regions of thought, that cannot themselves be deduced—or what the Marburg school would call "facts." Thus Windelband states that "philosophy can use neither of the deductive nor of the inductive method, as is customary in the other sciences. The validity of axioms can neither be inferred from anything else nor proven from the mass of individual cases in which their validity is shown." (Windelband 1883, in Luft 2015: 275). Or as Heinrich Rickert would put it, "without such value-presuppositions it remains impossible to have modern culture in its totality completely in view and then to understand [it] scientifically from all sides" (Rickert 1924: 143). Whether in the natural or the human sciences, you cannot think without some norms for thought already in place. Second, while norms for thought can be construed teleologically, that is, as guiding the purposive practice of inquiry and having a goal, of completeness, comprehension, etc., this cannot be understood metaphysically, as a real object that can someday be encountered, or not: "If the teleological viewpoint is claimed in this way for critical philosophy, then it is without any metaphysical hypostasizing of the concept of the end, and so it is therein that the fundamental difference appears in which philosophy finds itself to the rest of the sciences," in which the everyday distinction between representations and their external objects can be assumed, as in Kant's "empirical realism" (Windelband 1883, in Luft 2015: 275).

In his Strassburg presidential address a decade later, "History and Natural Science," Windelband introduced his famous distinction between "nomothetic" and "idiographic" sciences. This is not in the first instance a distinction of scientific subject matters, but of scientific methods: "this methodological dichotomy classifies only modes of investigation, not the contents of knowledge itself." "Nomothetic" sciences proceed by abstraction and aim at generalizations or laws, "idiographic" sciences aim at descriptions of particulars, or nomothetic sciences at the "form which invariably remains constant" and idiographic ones at the "unique, immanently defined content of the real event" (Windelband 1894, in Luft 2015: 291). This distinction does not line up neatly with a distinction between natural and human or social sciences, because while much natural science does aim at

discovering laws of nature, natural science also uses discovered laws to reconstruct individuals, such as the actual geological history of the earth or the actual course of evolution, while the human sciences use generalizations about human behavior to make inferences about what must have happened (or will happen) in particular cases. But abstraction always begins from perception, and the description of particulars begins from perception even more so, thus "the predominance of abstraction in natural science and of perceptuality in history" (Windelband 1894, in Luft 2015: 294), so all forms of knowledge are rooted not only in norms (or "value-presuppositions") but in perception and therefore the human point of view as well. There is no attempt to reduce all of reality to perception or other mental states in Windelband or Neo-Kantianism more generally, but both human perception and human values are the foundations of all forms of sciences. This is classical idealist epistemology without idealist metaphysics.

Windelband's insights would be systematized by Rickert in a series of lengthy works, each of which grew over multiple editions, including his habilitation thesis, *Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis* ("The Object of Knowledge"), which went through six editions from 1892 to 1928 (Rickert 2018), and his best-known work, *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* ("The Limits of Scientific Concept-Formation"), which went through four editions from 1896 to 1921 and which was translated (abridged) into English in 1986 (Rickert 1986). The latter work developed Windelband's distinction between nomothetic and idiographic sciences in great detail, and the former work made the Kantian argument that the standard of truth for judgments could not be some independent object to which judgments could be compared, but rather internal standards for judgment—in other words, value-presuppositions—themselves. The truth-value of judgment rather than any object in an ordinary sense thus becomes the "object of knowledge," while the judging subject rather than an external object becomes the primary focus of knowledge. But this was not a reduction of reality to mind or subject, and Rickert continued the Neo-Kantian project of doing epistemology without metaphysics, and thus of accepting an idealist approach to epistemology without commitment to idealist metaphysics. But let's turn here from Southwestern to Marburg Neo-Kantianism.

Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), the founder of the school, was one of the very first unconverted Jewish professors in Germany (although Germany was not unique in that regard; the first Jewish philosophy professor in Great

Britain, the Australian Samuel Alexander, was also appointed at Manchester at the same time as Cohen in Marburg). (A comprehensive study of Cohen's life and work is Beiser 2018.) He was the son of a cantor from Coswig, Saxony-Anhalt, only 15 kilometers from the birthplace of Moses Mendelssohn, the great German-Jewish philosopher of the previous century. He started rabbinical studies at Breslau at 16, but left that after four years to pursue secular philosophy at Breslau and Berlin, finally taking his Ph.D. at Halle. Like an eighteenth-century scholar, he then had to scrape by for some years as a tutor before becoming a *Privatdozent* in Marburg in 1873 and finally a professor in 1876. By then he had already published his first book, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* ("Kant's Theory of Experience") in 1871, his interpretation of Kant's first critique, which would be followed by similar books on Kant's moral philosophy and the third critique, namely *Kants Begründung der Ethik* ("Kant's Foundation of Ethics," 1877) and *Kants Begründung der Ästhetik* ("Kant's Foundation of Aesthetics," 1889). The last book is striking for its strongly pro-German tone, arguing that only the German combination of artistic and philosophical accomplishment could have led to the discipline of aesthetics, and, although a prominent Jewish intellectual in the Wilhelmine period, Cohen was never a Zionist but believed that Jews had a proper place in German culture. (He was long dead by 1933.) His commentaries on Kant were followed by a series of works in which he developed his own systematic philosophy, more loosely inspired by Kant, namely the *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* of 1902, *Ethik des reinen Willens* of 1904, and *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls* of 1912 ("Logic of Pure Knowledge," "Ethics of Pure Will," and "Aesthetics of Pure Feeling"). His final, posthumously published work was *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums* ("Religion of Reason from the Sources of Judaism," 1919), obviously inspired by Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* although aimed at rebutting Kant's Spinoza-inspired argument that although individual Jews could be as rationally moral as anyone else, *Judaism* was not a genuine religion at all, a fortiori not an expression of pure morality in terms of religious symbols, like Christianity, at least in its original form, but merely the civil legislation of a long-vanished theocratic state. In addition to all of this, a crucial work in Cohen's own philosophical development and that of the Marburg school generally was his 1883 book *Das Princip der Infinitesimal-Method und seine Geschichte: Ein Kapitel zur Grundlegung der Erkenntniskritik* ("The Principle of the Infinitesimal Method and its History: A Chapter in the Foundation of Critique of Knowledge").

Cohen's approach to Kant, evident from his first book, was grounded on the "analytic" method of the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* more than the supposedly "synthetic" method of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: he saw Kant as analyzing the presuppositions of the Newtonian physics of his time taken as "facts" rather than attempting to derive the principles of Newtonian physics from something even more basic, such as the unity of apperception or the conditions for time-determination. "Since Newton, there has existed a science built on *principles*, conscious of its foundations and presuppositions, and which proceeds according to the mathematical method" (Cohen 1883, quoted from Luft 2015: 105). This approach to Kant was and has continued to be widely influential. But Cohen did not think of the "facts" of Newtonian science as facts about what the individuals alive at a particular time happened to believe. A general tendency in Cohen's appropriation of Kant's theoretical philosophy and in his own theory of knowledge—signaled by his phrase "pure knowledge"—is a non-psychological account of knowledge: the structures or functions limned by the transcendental philosophy are not to be identified with psychological tendencies of individuals, because they are to be universally valid. This "anti-psychologism" was a common feature of the period, evident in the work of Frege and Husserl as well, and in all, at least in part, a response to John Stuart Mill's attempt at an empiricist philosophy of mathematics. Kant himself had of course insisted that transcendental philosophy could not be founded in empirical psychology—that was the gist of his critique of Locke and Hume. But even if one does not start philosophy with the results of empirical psychology, but starts instead from a priori principles of logic and mathematics, or from "value-presuppositions" or "facts," one must attribute to human beings at least the psychological abilities necessary to experience and think in accordance with the presuppositions or structures that are inferred from scientific beliefs accepted as fact. This would be "transcendental psychology": psychological generalizations as presuppositions rather than premises of other scientific principles or facts. It is hard to see how to eliminate this from philosophy.

Cohen's book on infinitesimals introduced another idea that would be crucial to Marburg Neo-Kantianism. The ontological status of infinitesimals had been an issue since the time of Newton and Leibniz, and how to understand infinites in general had become a central issue in nineteenth-century mathematics. Cohen's particular strategy was to start from Kant's often ignored second principle of empirical judgment, the "Anticipations of Perception," which asserts that "sensation" and the "real that corresponds to

it" always has some degree or "intensive magnitude," and to argue that we "are justified in ascribing reality to something when it can be generated or produced through a continuum of intensive magnitude" (Beiser 2018: 138). The key move here is to avoid the ontological difficulties that arise in trying to think of infinitesimals as objects that are always smaller than any object by instead thinking of them as more like moments in a process of experiencing or thinking. Here the philosopher tries to avoid ontology altogether, although the process of thinking is fundamental. Or, as Cohen puts the point in more general terms in *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*,

> Not the stars in the heavens are the objects of [the transcendental] method teaches us to contemplate, but the astronomical calculations; those facts of scientific reality are, as it were, the real which is to be accounted for, as that at which the transcendental gaze is directed. What is the basis of this reality that is given in such facts? . . . Those facts of law are the objects, not the star-objects (Cohen 1871: 20).

The objects of knowledge are the processes of thought themselves and their product, not something standing apart from and over against thought. Not so different from Rickert's idea in the *Object of Knowledge*, Cohen's thought thus stands in the tradition of idealism that we saw beginning with Fichte (although Fichte was not much mentioned throughout the Neo-Kantian period), and will lead to Cassirer's most basic philosophical move; also, we can say, an anti-ontological but epistemologically idealist move, namely, thinking in terms of *functions* rather than *substances*.

We will come back to that shortly, but first one last characteristic idea of Cohen's should be mentioned, namely, his reinterpretation of the Kantian idea of the thing in itself. Like his close contemporary Charles Sanders Peirce, Cohen did not think of the thing in itself ontologically, as an extant but otherwise unknowable object that "affects" us with the sensations that we synthesize, in accordance with the forms of space, time, and the categories, into our experience of the external and internal worlds. As Beiser has put it, "Cohen argues that it really makes no sense to talk about a thing-in-itself as a reality beyond or outside our representations: the objective correlate and cause of our representations is nothing more than an hypostasis of the *concept* of an object" (Beiser 2018: 74, emphasis added). This really implies two things: that we bring the concept of an object, or more concretely the forms of intuition and conceptualization that we use to think about objects, to our experience, and that we have the idea of completeness

in our knowledge of objects, although this is not an ontological or as Kant would say "constitutive" idea but a regulative ideal, always driving us to gather further data and expand and refine our conceptual and theoretical comprehension (see Horstmann 2008 b). Cohen's concept of the thing in itself is not an ontological concept, not a concept of a non-mental substance nor a concept of a supermind like Royce's absolute. It is simply a goal for human inquiry, or perhaps the ever-moving goalposts for human inquiry.

Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) came from a much wealthier and more cosmopolitan Jewish family than did Cohen, which cushioned his even longer wait for a professorship: in spite of a vast array of publications, he had to wait until 1919, thus age 45, for a professorship at the new university of Hamburg—which he held only until 1933, when he fled Nazi Germany, finding refuge first at Oxford, then in Sweden, finally at Yale and Columbia in the US. He had studied first in Berlin, then with Cohen at Marburg, as well as with Paul Natorp there. He completed his dissertation on Descartes in 1899, then included this in his first book on *Leibniz's System in its Scientific Foundation* in 1902. This was followed by the first two volumes of *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit* ("The Problem of Knowledge in the Philosophy and Science of Modern Times") in 1906 and 1907, a vast study of the influence of the development of modern science on modern philosophy from the Renaissance through Kant. (A third volume, on the post-Kantian systems, appeared in 1920, and a final volume, on "Philosophy, Science, and History since Hegel," was finished in Sweden but left behind there and not published until 1957, and then in an English translation, the only volume of the series to have been translated.) Meanwhile, Cassirer published his first systematic work, *Substanz und Funktion*, in 1910, translated into English as *Substance and Function* with *Einstein's Theory of Relativity* in 1921. The term "systematic" has to be used advisedly, since, in the Marburg tradition, Cassirer thought of philosophy as reflection upon science and its history, in due course as reflection upon all the sciences including the "human" or as he preferred "cultural sciences," and he almost always presented his views in the form of commentary on the sciences, in his broad sense, and their history. The Hamburg years of the 1920s saw the publication of the three volumes of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (also eventually followed by a fourth, posthumous volume), which has been translated into English not once but twice, and which Cassirer later summarized in English as *An Essay on Man* (1944). The turbulent 1930s saw the publication, among other works, of *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (1932; in English as *The Philosophy of the*

Enlightenment, 1951), and *Determinismus und Indeterminismus in der modernen Physik* (1936; in English as *Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics*, 1955), his attempt to incorporate the results of quantum mechanics into his Neo-Kantian framework. He published a methodological work on the *Logic of the Cultural Sciences* in 1942 and his final completed book, *The Myth of the State*, his critique of fascism, appeared in 1946, the year after his death, again in English before German. The recent edition of his unpublished texts is as large as the edition of his published works, and much in this vast corpus remains untranslated. (On Cassirer generally, see Krois 1987; Lofts 2000; Luft 2015; Matherne 2021; and Truwent ed. 2021. On Cassirer and analytic philosophy, Friedman 2000. On Cassirer and Heidegger, Gordon 2010 and Truwent 2022. For an extensive bibliography of Cassirer's work, see Matherne 2021: 261–5.)

Cassirer remained true to his Marburg heritage in two important regards. First, although he called his own position "critical idealism," he attempted to develop the epistemological insight of idealism, in his eventual terms that we always experience reality through symbolic forms of our own making, he abjured idealist metaphysics: the fact of human consciousness and of the human activities of representation through symbolic forms is ineliminable, but no reductionist program, whether the materialist program of reducing thought to physical properties and behavior or the idealist program of reducing physical objects to thought, is either necessary or possible. And more generally, philosophy begins with fact, or perhaps better, with facts, namely, the facts of science, or, better, of the sciences. But, Cassirer emphasizes, perhaps even more than Cohen, the facts of science are constantly evolving, and therefore philosophy, as reflection on those facts, is also constantly evolving. As he put it already in 1906, "The 'fact' of science is by its nature and surely remains an historically evolving fact." The "forms of judgment," are not, as Kant thought, fixed once and for all, but rather "signify the unitary and living *motives* of thinking, that proceed through all the multiplicity of their particular figurations and are activated in the creation and formulation of ever new categories" (*Erkenntnisproblem* 1: 14–15). Cassirer agrees with Kant that at the most basic level, humans work to comprehend reality in some form of spatial, temporal, explanatory, and meaningful relations, but does not regard any scheme at the next level of concreteness, such as Newtonian mechanics or Laplacean determinism, as fixed once and for all.

Our use of the word "relations" in the last sentence was intentional: Cassirer's fundamental philosophical move, explicit in *Substance and*

Function but underlying all his work, is to advocate, and argue that the progress of science requires, a transition from an ontology of substances to one of relations or "functions." Thought and knowledge do not consist in discovering and imitating or reproducing the fixed properties of independently existing objects, but in establishing relations among our experiences by means of functions that, like mathematical functions that take us from one value for a variable to others, can carry us from one experience to others in ways that we find explanatory, predictive, and useful. Cassirer writes,

> If we determine the object not as an absolute substance beyond all knowledge, but as the object shaped in progressing experience, we find that there is no "epistemological gap" to be laboriously spanned by some authoritative decree of thought, but a "transsubjective command." For this object may be called "transcendent" from the standpoint of a psychological individual; from the standpoint of logic and its supreme principles, nevertheless it is to be characterized as purely "immanent." It remains strictly within the sphere, which these principles determine and limit, especially the universal principles of mathematical and scientific knowledge. This simple thought alone constitutes the kernel of critical "idealism." (*Substance and Function* 297).

This way of looking at things begins with mathematics: numbers are not things counted, but the products of counting, not objects but so to speak objectifications of our process of counting, or organizing, calculating, etc. It continues on to physical science: particles, forces, waves, etc., are not objects independent of our increasingly refined equations, but objectifications of our equations, we might even say the sediments they deposit. And so on for other forms of thought, for example grammatical categories. As Cassirer continues,

> we do not know "objects" as if they were already independently determined and given as *objects*,—but we know *objectively*, by producing certain limitations and by fixating certain permanent elements and connections within the uniform flow of experience. The concept of the object in this sense constitutes no ultimate limit of knowledge, but is rather the fundamental instrument, by which all that has become its permanent expression is expressed and established. The object marks the logical possession of knowledge, and not a dark beyond forever removed from knowledge.
>
> (*Substance and Function* 303)

This approach is clearly inspired by Kant's famous statement in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that "An *object* is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is *united*" (B 137)—or, objects have been replaced by concepts of object. The difference with Kant—or at least with how the Kant of the first *Critique* and the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), Kant's attempted deduction of Newtonian physics, have typically been read, although the third *Critique* might suggest otherwise—is that for Cassirer these organizing concepts are not fixed once and for all, nor is there any reason to expect that they ever will be, but they are constantly evolving as what Kant would call our (collective) manifold of intuition, that is, the human experience in the ordinary sense of that term, is constantly evolving and expanding.

Cassirer's development of this position begins with mathematics and natural, especially physical, science in *Das Erkenntnisproblem* and *Substance and Function*: thus it was well within place by 1910. His work of the following decades was to extend his approach to the rest of human experience and thus the rest of the "cultural sciences." This was the task of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. There is no room here to detail his lengthy explorations of myth, religion, language, and history as forms of human organization of experience, or his account of art, a projected volume on which never appeared but which he explored in many articles (see Guyer 2014: 3: 335–51). But a few passages from the late *Essay on Man* sum up Cassirer's program (in the title of the work and in these passages, of course, Cassirer uses "man" in a non-gendered sense, but now we would say "human being," "humankind," etc.—a transition that Cassirer does anticipate in the first of these passages with the word "humanity"):

> We cannot define man by any inherent principle which constitutes his metaphysical essence—nor can we define him by any inborn faculty or instinct that may be ascertained by empirical observation. Man's outstanding characteristic, his distinguishing mark, is not his metaphysical or physical nature—but his work. It is this work, this system of human activities, which defines and determines the circle of "humanity." Language, myth, religion, art, science, history are the constituents, the various sectors of this circle. A "philosophy of man" would therefore be a philosophy which would give us insight into the fundamental structure of each of these activities . . . (*Essay on Man* 68).

That was what the philosophy of symbolic forms was supposed to do. And further:

> [S]pontaneity and productivity is the very center of all human activities. It is man's highest power and it designates at the same time the natural boundary of our human world. In language, in religion, in art, in science, man can do no more than to build up his own universe—a symbolic universe that enables him to understand and interpret, to articulate and organize, to synthesize and universalize his human experience.
>
> (*Essay on Man* 220–1)

However, Cassirer's recognition of the multiplicity of symbolic forms should not be understood as any form of mere relativism, or as implying that the several forms are incommensurable with each other and that there can be arbitrary choice among them. His view is that humans naturally strive for a unitary and comprehensive understanding of their condition, and that the mathematical and natural sciences have a central, organizing role to play in this project. He even says that science is "the last step in man's mental development and it may be regarded as the highest and most characteristic attainment of human culture" (*Essay on Man* 207). But this does not mean that everything else must be reduced to or explained in terms of natural science. It means something more like that our other symbolic forms cannot ultimately be incompatible with natural science. This might mean that some form, or some aspects of some forms, such as myth, may indeed be left behind in human history, but it is not a reductionist program.

Rather, the only thing that is reduced in Cassirer's philosophy is the independent, substantial "object," and it should be clear that his approach precludes idealist, but also for that matter, materialist metaphysics. There is no independent object, mental or physical, to which everything else can be reduced; there are physical but also mental ways of thinking about our experience. We can certainly organize aspects of our experience in terms of numbers, particles, waves, etc., without thinking of these as things that think, although we think about them; but we can equally, and indeed must organize some of our thinking about our experience in terms of mental functions such as representation, symbolization, and consciousness itself—and have no reason not to do so. These mental functions are just as much part of our experience and thought as the mathematical and physical objects that we conceive, *just as much facts of our experience*, and we have no reason to gainsay this. Of course, Cassirer's entire program depends on the

assumption of the reality of our own mental activity: "All objective truth, all certainty about the outer world as well as all certainty about itself that mankind is able to attain, appears to depend on the function of representation. Man knows the world and himself only through the image that he makes of both" (*Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* 4 [1996]: 93).

Should we worry if contemporary science cannot explain the fact of consciousness, as many allege, or be driven to any metaphysical form of idealism or dualism by that? No, for two reasons. One, just suggested, is that our own consciousness and abilities of representation and symbolism, whether or not they are shared by any other forms of being with which we are acquainted, are facts, as much as any other facts, and we cannot understand even the most stripped down form of physical science except as a mode of our own representational and symbolic activity. It would therefore be self-contradictory for physical science to cast doubt on the reality of thought, even if it cannot explain it. Second, we have no reason, certainly on Cassirer's account, to believe that we have approached anything like the final stage of physical science. At the very least, assertion of physicalism or materialism as a metaphysical doctrine would be premature. But in Cassirer's view we have no particular reason to think that we shall ever have reached the final stage of natural science. Materialism will always be premature. But then again, there is no reason to insist upon an idealist reduction of reality to thought. We just have to allow the reality of thought.

10
Further into the Twentieth Century

The English philosopher Robin George Collingwood (1889–1943) was half a generation younger than Cassirer, although he died two years before the latter, his life cut short by ill health. His position is in many ways similar to that of Cassirer, although he is often identified as a Hegelian idealist. This is in part because of his association with the Italian Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), whose book on Giam Battista Vico (Croce 1911) and autobiography (Croce 1918) he translated into English. But although Croce was something of a Hegelian, and called his philosophy a philosophy of the spirit, he was also something of a Kantian, and in any case he was not a metaphysical idealist. He was Kantian in dividing human experience into the two great categories of the theoretical and the practical, and then dividing those into the domains of the intuitive or aesthetic and cognitive or conceptual on the one hand, and the economic or prudential and the moral on the other, and he was Hegelian in his vision of the gradual emergence of more adequate from less adequate ways of experiencing and thinking in all these areas. Croce's systematic philosophy was presented in his *Aesthetics* (1902), *Logic* (1905), *Philosophy of the Practical* (1909), and *Theory and History of Historiography* (1917). But in his book *What is Living and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel* (Croce 1907) Croce explicitly abjured any metaphysical interpretation of "spirit," identifying his conception of spirit strictly with human consciousness and making no attempt to reduce all reality to human consciousness although of course we experience all of it through the forms of human consciousness, the four forms thereof on his account. Collingwood was a working archaeologist as well as a philosopher—he became the leading expert of his time on the physical traces as well as history of Roman Britain—and he hardly doubted the reality of the physical world or attempted to reduce it to some form of thought, human or otherwise. But, like Cassirer with his functions and symbolic forms, Collingwood held that our experience of reality was never immediate, but always mediated by what he called "absolute presuppositions," assumptions like "Every event has a cause" in the period of classical mechanics, which frame our inquiries and hypotheses. They are not themselves demonstrable,

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
© Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann 2023. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192848574.003.0010

but they do evolve; in one case, he argues, the absolute presupposition of the Newtonian period that everything happens as a result of a cause has been replaced in modern physics by the absolute presupposition that "everything happens according to laws" so that "Cases of impact, for example, are no longer regarded as cases in which the Laws of Motion are rendered inoperative by interference with one body on the part of another; they are regarded as cases of 'free' motion (that is, motion not interfered with) under peculiar geometrical conditions, a line of some other kind being substituted for the straight line of Newton's first law" (Collingwood 1940: 50–1). Another obvious comparison to Collingwood's conception of absolute presuppositions is Thomas Kuhn's conception of paradigms as frameworks within which scientific inquiry takes place and which are adjusted to accommodate refractory data, until they can no longer be easily adjusted and are replaced.

Unlike the Neo-Kantians, Collingwood was happy to retain the term "metaphysics," but what he meant by it was a "historical science," the description and analysis of the absolute presuppositions underlying the more specific questions asked and answered in the inquiries of particular times and places (Collingwood 1940: 49). He also calls this "metaphysics without ontology" (p. 17). So although he accepted the term that Neo-Kantians like Cassirer rejected, like Cassirer he saw philosophy as essentially connected to history, and his "systematic" works too always included much history. A good example of this is his posthumous *Idea of Nature* (Collingwood 1945). Along with rejecting ontology, Collingwood rejected being labeled as either a realist or an idealist. By his rejection of realism, he meant to reject not only naive realism, the view that we perceive things exactly as they really are, without any mediation let alone distortion by our own perceptual and intellectual faculties, but also the kind of Oxford realism in which he had been educated, most closely associated with John Cook Wilson (1849–1915), which asserted the reality of propositions independently of our thought of them—in this regard not so different from the early views of Moore and Russell, and as plausibly considered a form of Platonic idealism as of realism, that is, a realism about ideas. Collingwood rejected the reality of propositions as abstract objects, and instead held that human thought must be understood in terms of questions and answers: in real contexts of inquiry, real people ask real questions, including about their presuppositions, although not about their absolute presuppositions, and arrive at real answers to them (Collingwood 1939: 44–52). In his *Autobiography*, Collingwood tells a charming story of how he arrived at this view. On his walk in London to and from the Admiralty Intelligence

Division, where he worked during World War I, he would pass the Albert Memorial. He thought it "loathsome," but he could not believe that its designer had set out to create something ugly. So he finally asked himself, what had the designer (Sir George Gilbert Scott) thought that he was doing: what problem had he set himself, what question had he asked, to which he could have thought this was the answer? (Collingwood 1939: 29–43; Collingwood was only 49 when he wrote this, but he had already suffered a major stroke and knew he could not count on a long life.) Collingwood's approach is not metaphysical idealism, but it does show a strong faith in human rationality: the presumption is always that human beings have what they think is a good reason for doing what they do, and the task of an interlocutor, whether a historian, a philosopher, or another person in everyday life is to figure out what that reason is. Something like this is what has come to be called the principle of charity.

In Collingwood's philosophy of history, he calls this process "re-enactment" (Collingwood 1946). This might be thought to mean that the historian is to literally re-create the original event in her mind, but it does not really mean anything metaphysical like that: it just means that the task of the historian is to put herself into the shoes of her subject, try to see the situation as the protagonist did and to figure out why the protagonist thought that what she did—starting this campaign, instituting this law, etc.—was the right thing to do—and only then, if at all, to judge how wise the protagonist was. So Collingwood's doctrine of historical re-enactment is not a metaphysical or ontological form of idealism. The closest that Collingwood seems to come to metaphysical idealism is in the first part of his *Principles of Art* (Collingwood 1938) where, in distinguishing (fine) art from mere craft, he dismisses the creation of a physical medium for a work of art from the creation of the work itself, a mere engineering puzzle, and thinks of the latter as complete in the mind or imagination of the artist. But this is best seen as an extreme way of stating that the artist's conception of what she is trying to do—what question she is posing and what she thinks the answer is—is a *necessary* condition of making a work of art (an anticipation of Arthur Danto's later view that a work of art exists only within a theory of art); in any case, as the book proceeds, Collingwood makes it clear that the artist's task is to find a way to *express* an emotion in a medium accessible to others (Part Two), and that the artist's work typically progresses in interaction with a public and in many cases (e.g., painting, sculpture) physical medium. As the artist works, she steps back and looks at what she has done, modifies it in response, and so on until she is satisfied

with the result, at least for the time: it is a physical as well as a mental process, that takes place in a physical as well as a mental world. Even Collingwood's aesthetics is not a metaphysical form of idealism. (On Collingwood generally, see Mink 1969; Duessen 1981; D'Oro 2002; Dharamsi, D'Oro, and Leach eds. 2018. On Collingwood's philosophy of art, see Guyer 2014: 3: 189–233.)

There has been increasing interest in the work of Collingwood in recent years, going hand in hand with publication of much additional material. But in his lifetime and mostly since Collingwood has not been regarded as part of the mainstream of anglophone, analytic philosophy. In that mainstream, the label of "idealist" has generally been rejected, with horror, although it is our view that at least the epistemological motivation toward idealism has continued to be active, even powerful. To trace its subterranean presence of at least epistemological idealism throughout the remainder of twentieth-century philosophy would exceed the scope of this book. But we will now offer some examples of leading twentieth-century philosophers who were influenced by idealist epistemology, at least at the beginning through transmission from Neo-Kantianism, as well as a few outliers who were actually willing to identify themselves as metaphysical idealists.

Neo-Kantianism influenced the broader stream of analytic philosophy most strongly through the work of Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), whose *Logical Construction of the World* (1928) analyzes knowledge in terms of relations constructed on perceived similarities in qualities of objects, thus taking a subjectivist starting point and then adding constructive activities of the mind to it—a form of epistemological idealism (see Carus 2007: especially ch. 4; as well as Friedman 1999 and 2000). Nelson Goodman's (1906–98) *Structure of Appearance* (1951) undertook a similar project. Subsequent to the *Logical Construction*, in influential work in the 1930s (e.g., Carnap 1937), Carnap distinguished between questions "internal" to a conceptual framework or system and "external" questions about which conceptual framework to adopt, which can be decided only on pragmatic or even aesthetic grounds, and this too might be considered a form of epistemological idealism, although it also demonstrates the interrelation of epistemologically motivated idealism with pragmatism that we observed going back to Peirce and Royce. Thomas Kuhn's (1922–96) famous conception of "paradigms" of science which are not automatically rejected because of refractory evidence but are given up only when an alternative paradigm comes to seem preferable can be seen as being in the Carnapian tradition (Kuhn 1962), as can Hilary Putnam's (1926–2016)

"internal realism" of the 1980s (Putnam 1981), and both these positions thus reflect the continuing influence of the epistemological motivation for idealism. Even W. V. O. Quine (1908–2000), who was a committed physicalist in the sense of believing that other sciences are in principle reducible to physics, nevertheless shared an aspect of idealist epistemology in his conception of the "web of belief," that is, the idea that knowledge consists in a body of beliefs, from particular observation statements up to logical principles, which faces experience only as a whole and which can be modified at any point within it in order to accommodate refractory experience, as seems best (see Quine and Ullian 1970). As we have seen, similar ideas were already to be found in Cassirer's *Substance and Function* and Collingwood's *Essay on Metaphysics*. Wilfrid Sellars's conception of the "space of reasons," taken up in Robert Brandom's inferentialism, also reflects this impulse, although Sellars always considered himself, like his father, a scientific realist, and his most explicitly Kantian work, *Science and Metaphysics* (1968), gives what might be regarded as a pragmatist rather than idealist spin to Kant's phenomena/noumena distinction, interpreting the noumenal as what would be known if science were complete, an idea clearly inspired by Charles Sanders Peirce—although also found in Hermann Cohen and not completely different in spirit from Royce's idea that the error of our particular beliefs can be understood only by comparison to a body of complete and completely true beliefs, not to some independent, non-belief reality. These are just a few examples of how some of the most prominent paradigms, to borrow Kuhn's term, of analytic philosophy still reflect the impulse to epistemological idealism even though the name "idealism" was anathematized by Moore, Russell, and the New Realists.

A few anglophone philosophers have been willing to identify themselves as idealists. Before we continue on to consider some of those who have not been but have nevertheless been influenced by idealist epistemology, let us look at a few of those. One mid-twentieth-century philosopher who had no qualms about identifying himself as an idealist was Brand Blanshard (1892–1987). The difference between Blanshard and many of the mid-twentieth-century analytic philosophers is precisely that Blanshard accepted the assumption that there must be a necessary isomorphism between knowledge and its object, and so was not content to posit something real outside of the web of belief or space of reasons, but brought reality into the realm of thought.

Blanshard was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan, then won a Rhodes scholarship to Merton College, Oxford, where his tutor was

H. W. B. Joseph (1867–1943), one of the Oxford realists, but where he also met Bradley, a lifelong research fellow at Merton. After earning an MA at Columbia, where he participated in a research project under John Dewey, and then World War I service in France, he completed his Oxford BA and then a Ph.D. at Harvard under the supervision of C. I. Lewis (1883–1964)—so he had a very diverse philosophical education. He taught at Swarthmore College from 1925 to 1944 and at Yale from 1944 until 1961. Remarkably, Blanshard was at different points in this career in the same department as each of the Sellarses—he was an undergraduate at Michigan when the "new realist" Roy Wood Sellars (1880–1973) was a young teacher there, and was then the colleague of Wilfrid Sellars (1912–89) during the latter's tenure at Yale from 1958 to 1963. There are affinities between his views and theirs, especially with Wilfrid Sellars's model of conceptually informed perception; but they differ decidedly on the issue of idealism versus material realism. Blanshard's idealism was at full-strength in the two volumes of *The Nature of Thought* (1939), which was dedicated to the Oxford idealists H. H. Joachim (1868–1938) and E. F. Carritt (1876–1964); many arguments remained the same but the inference to idealism was somewhat toned-down in his later trilogy, *Reason and Goodness* (1961), *Reason and Analysis* (1962), and *Reason and Belief* (1974).

The affinity with Wilfrid Sellars lies in Book I of *The Nature of Thought*, "Thought in Perception," in which Blanshard argues that we always perceive something "as this rather than that," thus that "the recognition of the universal and the placing it in relation to other universals" are always inseparable from perception (1939: 1: 65). This recognition of the conceptually infused character of perception, the position adopted by such Sellarsians as John McDowell (McDowell 1994) and currently known as "conceptualism," does not by itself entail idealism. Rather, Blanshard's idealism is on display in volume 2, Book III of his work, "The Movement of Reflection," where he offers his theory of truth. Here he argues that coherence rather than correspondence is not only the "test" but also the "nature" of truth:

> It is hard to see . . . how anyone could consistently take coherence as the test of truth unless he also took it as a character of reality. (1939: 2: 267)

Here Blanshard evinces the premise that knowledge must be isomorphic with the known that underlies many arguments for idealism. His next move, the characterization of the coherence of reality in terms of systematicity,

seems sufficiently abstract to remain neutral about the ontology of reality. But he also argues that knowledge or thought must be part of a *single* system with its object, the world (1939: 2: 292), which, since knowledge is incontrovertibly mental, pushes the whole system in that direction. His idealism becomes even clearer in his defense of the Bradleian doctrine that all relations are internal relations, and as such necessary relations, so that

> [t]hese old sharp lines of mutual exclusion between essence, property, and accident are like the lines of a surveyor, of great convenience, no doubt, to ourselves, but misleading when taken as divisions marked out by nature (1939: 2: 480)

and when he further asserts

> (i) that all things are *causally* related, directly or indirectly; (ii) that being causally related involves being *logically* related. (1939: 2: 492)

This makes sense if the character of reality is ultimately either conceptual or mental in nature, subject to logical relations, and not purely physical, subject merely to causal relations. Blanshard's statement that the "old sharp lines" between essence and accident are not so sharp after all might sound like W. V. O. Quine's thesis that there is no sharp distinction between the analytic and the synthetic (Quine 1951), but while this leads Quine to treat all our beliefs as if they are synthetic, ultimately dependent upon our total response (the web of belief) to observation of external reality, Blanshard's position is more that all our beliefs are ultimately analytic, that is, analyses of the conceptual structure of reality, or of reality as a conceptual structure. Blanshard concludes his lengthy argument with claims reminiscent of Hegel:

> The aim of thought from its very beginning . . . was at understanding. The ideal of complete understanding would be achieved only when this system that rendered it necessary was not a system that itself was fragmentary and contingent, but one that was all-inclusive and so organized internally that every part was linked to every other by intelligible necessity . . . . If our account of the end is accepted, it will be found to throw light backward along the whole course of the inquiry. For it presents the goal which thought, from its first stirrings in perception, has more or less unknowingly been seeking, the end potential in every idea, the whole implicitly at work

> at every stage in the movement of reflection, exercising its steady pressure against irrelevant excursions and toward the completion of fragmental knowledge into stable system. (1939: 2: 518)

Knowledge must be knowledge of necessary connections, and reality itself must be an intrinsically intelligible system of connections or internal relations. Blanshard's combination of the premise of the necessary isomorphism of knowledge and the known with the doctrine of internal relations exemplifies both an epistemological and an ontological argument for idealism. Blanshard's view that the goal of thought is in some way already present in thought is reminiscent of Royce's conception of the absolute as well.

Since the work of Blanshard two further anglophone philosophers have attempted an explicit defense of idealism. Both John Foster (1941–2009), in *The Case for Idealism* (1982) and Timothy L. S. Sprigge (1932–2007) in *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (1983) constructed defenses of what Foster defined by the three theses

> (1) Ultimate contingent reality is wholly mental. (2) Ultimate contingent reality is wholly non-physical. (3) The physical world is the logical product of facts about human sense-experience (Foster 1982: 3)

and what Sprigge called "panpsychism." In both cases their defenses were based on the epistemological premise that the object of perception is fully present in the *act* of perception; Sprigge added the argument that we must presuppose some noumenal ground for our phenomenal objects; but unlike Kant, who after he stripped things in themselves of their spatiality and/or temporality, insisted that we remain otherwise agnostic about their nature, Sprigge argued for

> the noumenal backing or "in itself" of the physical by saying that it consists in innumerable mutually interacting centres of experience, or, what comes to the same, of pulses and flows of experience. (Sprigge 1983: 85)

In other words, the noumenal "backing" of the phenomenal is nothing but the sum total of actual and possible human experience, which Sprigge considers, in terms going back to Bradley, a "concrete universal." One could argue that this confuses the sum total of experience or thought about reality with reality itself, but Sprigge rejects that kind of distinction from the beginning of his argument; basically, he holds all knowledge to be

knowledge by acquaintance, and what we have when we subsume any experience under a concept or universal is an immediate relation to a part of a concrete universal—so all of reality is itself mental in nature.

These arguments have remained outliers, for analytical philosophy has been overwhelmingly influenced by the paradigm of the natural sciences, and often committed to some form of naturalism. Or so it would seem; however, as the examples of Green and Royce as well as earlier idealists such as Schelling make clear, there is no necessary incompatibility between idealism and some forms of naturalism. In particular, naturalism, especially broadly understood as a methodology rather than ontology, is not automatically committed to the kinds of realism, especially the naive realism of assuming that our representations reproduce the physical constitution of external objects, that were initially opposed to idealism. One might even get the impression that in contemporary scientifically oriented philosophy idealism is no longer considered a threat. The way in which in current discussions in the philosophy of mind some idealistic conceptions under the general name of "Panpsychism," already used by Sprigge, are taken seriously (Thomas Nagel, David Chalmers) seems to be a good indicator of this tendency.

In so-called "continental" philosophy, we might suggest, the main alternative to the idealism of the nineteenth century and lingering tendencies to idealism in both Neo-Kantianism and Husserlian phenomenology has not been any straightforward form of realism, but rather the "life philosophy" (*Lebensphilosophie*) pioneered by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1916), then extensively developed by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and, without Heidegger's political baggage, by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61). The central idea of this approach to philosophy is that the starting point of thought and knowledge is neither anything "subjective" like sense-data or ideas nor anything simply objective like the objects of science, but the lived experience of "being-in-the-world," from which both the "subjective" such as sense-data and the "objective" such as objects theorized by science are abstractions or constructions made for specific purposes, but which should not be reified in any way that creates a problem of getting from one side to the other, let alone any possibility of reducing one side to the other and thus ending up with a choice between idealism and realism. Apart from all issues of style, and whether this has been clear to the two parties or not, perhaps the deepest reason for the ongoing divide between "analytic" and "continental" philosophy is the ongoing tension between the impulse to epistemological idealism and the

attraction of the idea that "being-in-the-world" precedes the very distinction between subjective and objective. But then again, this underlying idea of the Heideggerian approach to philosophy may already be suggested in the work of Schelling, so perhaps the fundamental debate within twentieth-century philosophy has taken place within a framework itself inspired by a form of idealism, namely phenomenology. But this would be a long story, for another day.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, idealism, understood as a philosophical program, may be sharing the fate of many other projects in the history of modern philosophy. Originally conceived in the middle of the eighteenth century as a real alternative to materialistic and naturalistic perspectives, it may now become sublated and integrated into views about the nature of reality that ignore metaphysical oppositions or epistemological questions connected with the assumption of the priority of mind over matter or the other way round. Instead the focus may be shifting to establishing a "neutral" view according to which "anything goes" (Paul Feyerabend) as long as it does not contradict or at least is not incompatible with our favored metaphysical, epistemological, and scientific (both natural and social) methods and practices.

Epistemological and metaphysical theories that involve an explicit or implicit stance toward idealism in the twentieth century as discussed so far can lead to the impression that at least in the English-speaking regions of Western civilization idealism became a matter of concern in roughly the same manner it was of interest in the pre-Kantian era. This leap back in time is indicated quite bluntly by the spiritualistic undertones from Bradley's, McTaggart's, and Royce's defenses of idealism up to Blanshard's attempt of a vindication, defenses that are strongly reminiscent of programs in the wake of Berkeley's immaterialism. This retrospective attitude also is suggested by another characteristic feature of the twentieth-century positions to which we have drawn attention. This feature shows up in the persistent habit, shared not only by the self-confessed idealists but also by their modern opponents, whether they identify themselves as realists, materialists, or naturalists (from Moore and Russell to Carnap and Quine and even the Neo-Kantians), of dealing with epistemological and metaphysical questions within a framework that holds on to a traditional, common-sensical understanding of the world. Within this framework we are asked to think of reality as consisting of both mind-endowed subjects and physical, bodily objects. They are both conceived of as self-standing, individual substantial items paradigmatically exemplified by conscious human beings on the one hand and by

appropriately sized natural bodies like trees or stars or atoms on the other, standing in various physical (e.g., spatial, temporal, causal) and mental (e.g., conceptual, judgmental, inferential) relations. By not questioning this framework, the discussion of the ultimate constitution of reality and of our knowledge of it was thus restricted to an exchange of opinions and arguments as to what kind of substance, physical or mental, is better suited to do justice to our most cherished epistemological and metaphysical beliefs regarding the circumference and the limits of what we know and what we cannot know about the world. As we have been suggesting, this discussion led to an impasse because it turned out that traces of epistemological idealism could be found even in the supposedly realistic, materialistic, and/or naturalistic positions, just as well as aspects of realism and naturalism remained in philosophies that explicitly endorse metaphysical idealism (again, think of Schelling, Green, and Royce).

However, the twentieth century was not a period only of regression in metaphysics and epistemology to pre-Kantian idealism. One can also observe that especially in the non-English-speaking, "continental" world a renewed interest in what could be called a reshaping of idealistic conceptions under different brand names like Vitalism, Phenomenology, Existentialism took place. But these tendencies emerged not only on the "Continent." They also appeared in Anglo-American contexts around the second half of the last century. Although it is difficult to tell what exactly initiated this change in attitude, two motives are obvious: the acknowledgment of the constitutive function of a social dimension not only in all our practical dealings with reality but also in our theoretical approach to the world, and the move away from talk about the mental to a language that favors terms like "the conceptual" or "conceptuality" instead. A reason for this shift might have been that talk about the conceptual is less prone to give rise to psychological connotations that are invariably connected with a mentalistic vocabulary (and were already rejected by nineteenth-century philosophers like Frege, Husserl, and Cohen) and because of a closer affinity to linguistic practices that are supposed to govern our conceptual activities. Looking at Anglo-American philosophy of the last seventy years or so against the background of a new orientation fueled by motivations like the two mentioned, it is not that surprising that elements of Hegel's idealism, especially his conceptual realism connected with his social conception of what he calls "Spirit," became of interest again. At any rate, with the exception of Wittgenstein all of the better-known representatives of positions that integrate conceptuality and sociality into their epistemological and metaphysical teachings

(e.g., Sellars, McDowell, Brandom) are quite explicit about a Hegelian influence on their theories. This influence, however, almost never shows up directly but is mediated by references to (American) forerunners such as George Herbert Mead, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey.

This most recent phase of the history of modern Western, in particular Anglo-American, philosophy might also be described as a renewed attempt to answer questions about what grounds knowledge on the basis of the assumption that the constitution of knowledge and the constitution of the world are processes of reciprocal dependence: knowledge-claims are taken to depend on the world while at the same time what counts as the world is dependent on what is taken to be knowable. If mind-dependence of the world is the distinguishing mark of idealistic theories and the world-dependence of the mind is the peculiar characteristic of the alternative positions (realism, materialism, naturalism), then one can expect these new attempts to find out the conditions of knowledge to reject both unadulterated idealism and its unmitigated alternative. And so they do. To think of these approaches to epistemological questions in terms of the time-honored opposition between idealism and realism has become obsolete. Thus in looking at what has been suggested in the last few decades the question cannot be whether or not the respective proposals match patterns of thinking representative of traditional idealism or realism. Rather one can look for traces of idealistic motives in their philosophical viewpoints.

If one takes this limited objective as a guideline, then three of the more recent ventures into broadly epistemological issues are of special interest. These are the remarks of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), published posthumously under the title *On Certainty*, the position that Wilfrid Sellars (1912–89) endorses in his *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, and the stance that John McDowell (1942–) takes up in his *Mind and World*. They are of special interest because although their authors do not explicitly endorse idealism, they tend toward conclusions that seem to make idealistic elements in epistemology unavoidable.

Wittgenstein's engagement with questions concerning the conditions of knowledge in the widest possible sense is documented most tellingly in his remarks collected in *On Certainty* (1969). They were apparently sparked by a renewed interest in G. E. Moore's discussion of skeptical challenges to the possibility of knowledge. In two influential papers, "A Defense of Common-Sense" (1925) and "Proof of an External World" (1939), Moore had presented arguments devised to refute philosophical skepticism. Wittgenstein,

it seems, felt induced by Moore's considerations to explore the space of conceivable answers to questions as to the mostly hidden implications and presuppositions involved in the use of the verb "to know" (*wissen*) in different settings ranging from philosophical and mathematical via scientific and legal to everyday contexts. He pursued this task not just in order to come to grips with skeptical challenges in the narrow sense (i.e., with problems like "is there an external world? can I know that I have two hands? can I distinguish between dream and reality?") but to delve into the vast terrain of what might be considered to be reasonable bases for justifying knowledge-claims in different circumstances. In these late remarks Wittgenstein sticks to his peculiar manner of discussing philosophical topics without taking up a clear-cut question or providing a straightforward answer. Instead he tries to find a way to formulate the questions he is interested in that already points to the obstacles to answering them. The prevalent scheme of his notes could be characterized as staging an interplay between two rhetorical acts, first describing a scenario in which a certain manner of speaking seems to make sense and then surveying what has to be the case if the manner of speaking under scrutiny were indeed to make sense in the envisioned situation. Suggestive instances of this rhetorical practice are his treatment of the avowal "I am in England" (§§419ff.), his discussion of Moore's example that "he *knows* that the earth existed long before his birth" (§§84ff. and elsewhere), and especially his remarks as to the appropriateness or the inappropriateness of the use of the expression "I know . . ." (e.g., §§553ff. *passim*) in different circumstances. A remark that he incorporates in his notes could be read as indicating that the methodological reason for relying on this rhetorical device has to do with his personal attitude toward topics in philosophy, an attitude that he compares to a stance toward a painting. "It is," Wittgenstein writes, "as if I were to see a painting (say a painted stage-set) and recognize what it represents from a long way off at once and without the slightest doubt. But now I step nearer: and then I see a lot of patches of different colours, which are all highly ambiguous and do not provide any certainty whatever" (§481). In Wittgenstein's eyes, the somewhat opaque fact of the simultaneous presence of a specious certainty and a manifest ambiguity in philosophical claims is the main obstacle to the attempt to implement an assertive mode of reasoning, in the spirit of a cast-iron proof, as the proper style in philosophy. The best that can be achieved in philosophy is something else which, he thinks, his remarks reveal in a paradigmatic way. One can open up different ways of looking at phenomena and become attentive to the twists and turns connected with

focusing on them. Wittgenstein expresses this sentiment nicely by resorting to a metaphor: "I believe it might interest a philosopher, one who can think himself, to read my notes. For even if I have hit the mark only rarely, he would recognize what targets I have been ceaselessly aiming at" (§387).

Against the background of this attitude toward philosophical problems it should not be expected that Wittgenstein would provide definite answers to anyone who decided to accompany him on his bumpy road. Rather, his analyses are meant to induce a thoughtful person to pursue lines of thought that point to conceptual spaces within which resources might be found that could lead either to understanding why the problem at hand has become a problem or to its dissolution. The directions to which he points in the case of the problem of knowledge can be characterized by three -isms, namely foundationalism, contextualism, and, somewhat awkwardly, social empiricism. In each of these -isms, in their Wittgensteinian version, one might detect idealistic traces.

At the center of his discussion of the conditions of knowledge lies what is called here Wittgenstein's foundationalism, that is, his belief that every knowledge-claim is grounded in a *Weltbild*, a "picture of the world." By a knowledge-claim he means a speech act that expresses a conviction that is based on a reason or a ground (cf. §§91, 243). A *Weltbild* "is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false" (§94), "it is the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting" (§162, cf. §167; Wittgenstein's formulations here are remarkably reminiscent of Collingwood's conception of absolute presuppositions, which play precisely this role). According to Wittgenstein there are many ways in which a knowledge-claim is anchored in whatever it is that counts as a *Weltbild*. Judging from his examples, these ways include, for instance, perception, logical inference, hearsay, and everything else that seems to be a legitimate means of justifying a claim (memories, learning, etc.). What is important for him to emphasize is that a knowledge-claim is not just vague but in a certain sense meaningless if it is not founded in a *Weltbild*, a thesis that entails foundationalism.

Three questions unfold immediately: (1) What exactly does a *Weltbild* consist in? (2) How does the anchoring of a claim in a *Weltbild* take place? And (3) what is the truth-status of a *Weltbild* (is it itself right or true, or wrong or false)? The short answer to (1) is that a *Weltbild* in its broadest meaning is determined by what he also calls "our whole system of evidence" (§185, cf. §247), where however exactly what is included in this system remains somewhat vague. All that he is prepared to imply, to infer

from his examples, is that whatever counts as an item that is beyond reasonable doubt, whether it is a proposition, a fundamental attitude (*Grundanschauung*) (cf. §238), a fact, an event, could be a member of this system. The justification of the evidence for both the item and the system does not consist in an apparent insight into the truth of either of them but in our acting accordingly: "Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;—but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game" (§204). What counts as an item beyond reasonable doubt is a flexible matter and depends on circumstances. Although a *Weltbild* is presumably meant to be a system that is internally coherent and hence void of internal tensions, it seems to be open to adjustments that are made necessary or have become unavoidable because of changes in individual outlooks based on experiences and cultural and historical developments that somehow shatter hitherto sacrosanct beliefs and convictions. (Again, *Weltbilder* can change under historical pressure as Collingwood's absolute presuppositions and Kuhn's paradigms do.) What Wittgenstein has in mind as to how these experiential and social processes take place everyone is free to guess. It is within this framework that a *Weltbild* is conceived of by Wittgenstein. The even shorter answer to (2) is that the anchoring, the grounding of a knowledge claim in a *Weltbild* does not seem to be a special act performed by the knower. It consists rather in a disposition not to give credence to anything that could count as a disproof of the claim in question (cf. §245). This disposition is triggered by all the available, appropriate ways of grounding, of anchoring a claim, perhaps above all by direct experience (perception, memory, hearsay) (cf. §66) but also by what has been picked up in standard learning processes (through teachers, parents, or other authorities) (cf. §§93, 159ff.). The leading ideas to which Wittgenstein wants to draw attention are that knowledge-claims are connected with the disposition to believe certain things unconditionally and that any references to an objective fact that would function as the provider of justification by correspondence are purely circumstantial (cf. §§191, 203). Finally, the shortest answer can be given to (3). The question as to the truth-status of a *Weltbild* is ill-conceived because truth-values are assigned to the propositions that a knowledge-claim contains on the basis of their dependence on a *Weltbild*. (Unlike Collingwood, Wittgenstein continues to speak of propositions.) One and the same knowledge-claim can be true in one picture of the world but not in another. The picture of the world itself is neither true nor false. It is only within its boundaries that the distinction between

true and false can be made. This, at least, indicates the direction in which Wittgenstein's reflections tend to move (cf. §§94, 162).

These foundational tendencies in Wittgenstein's considerations already provide a lot of material that from an idealistic point of view could be seen as highly reminiscent of idealist epistemology if not ontology, as our comparisons with Collingwood already suggest. After all, already the mental connotations to which the very concept of a *Weltbild* is prone to give rise and the grounding function that is attributed to it can easily remind not only the idealist of traditional tendencies in idealistic theories to favor mind-dependence of the world in one form or another in the attempt to account for the possibility of knowledge. Idealistic tendencies could also be detected in what is called here Wittgenstein's contextualism, that is, his view that a *Weltbild* is not a stable, unchanging arrangement of a number of different beliefs, convictions, attitudes, and dispositions but forms a coherent system that varies in accordance with circumstances. Rather than being conceived of as the expression of a collection of eternal truths, it has to be characterized as only the provider of an ever-changing context within which a knowledge-claim can be evaluated as true, false, or meaningless. Wittgenstein does not clearly explain how such *Weltbilder* understood in this contextual sense come about and what makes them change. The leading idea seems to be that a *Weltbild* can be assessed from at least two very different perspectives, from a personal, subjective stance and a non-personal, objective one. In both cases it proves to be a flexible, almost amorphous structure that is shaped by and in accordance with many factors ranging from experiences via learning processes to social and cultural circumstances. Looked at from a personal point of view a *Weltbild* is the by and large obscure and rarely directly available background against which a person forms her judgments about what is the case or not. What is contained in this background, the beliefs, convictions, and attitudes to which the subject is ultimately committed, is something of which that subject is not immediately aware but what it has to find out by paying attention to what in the end it is unable and unwilling to put into question (cf. §512). In what exactly these background assumptions consist seems to be impossible to tell in advance because they are revealed in processes the significance of which depends largely on the context in which a knowledge-claim is made. It is easy to imagine situations in which a person is surprised about what turns out to be an item she cannot but hold on to unshakably. This is so because our life is embedded in our *Weltbild*, "it is there—like our life" (§559). In the case of a non-personal, objective perspective a *Weltbild* understood as the totality of beliefs and attitudes that

cannot be given up though they are not based on grounds (cf. §§410f.) is subject to random and incidental changes because of its dependence-relation to historical, cultural, and other social contexts. Which set of items the participants of a specific culture in a particular historical situation are prepared to defend by all means, that is, which *Weltbild* will be dominant at a certain time, will be influenced by many factors. Some have to do with the varying degrees in which the members of a life-form take science, religion and other ideological institutions to provide justifying reasons for knowledge-claims. However, most of these factors will determine what sort of experience can count as evidence in what context. Consequently, a *Weltbild* understood as a system of evidence is dependent again on processes and practices that are steadily in flux and hence cannot be established as a stable context for once and for all (cf. §§105, 136, 140, 350). The picture that emerges is that epistemically accessible reality, that is, reality understood as the context in which knowledge-claims can be substantiated, turns out to be what a knower cannot but help to take for granted (cf. §87). Traces of idealism can easily be found in this line of reasoning. In particular, the assumption that knowledge-claims are not grounded in hard facts but find their legitimation in a somewhat opaque web of beliefs (cf. §225) and attitudes that ultimately reflects subjective evidences can be seen as pointing in this direction. The expression "web of belief" of course reminds us of Quine; at the same time, it might be worth mentioning that if one is willing to share the perspective that this Wittgensteinian line of thought opens up then Michel Foucault's research program for an *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) also emerges at the horizon: in order to find out what a *Weltbild* consists in, how it changes and eventually gives rise to a new one, one has to look at statements (*énoncées*) and the changing conditions of their meaningful use in a manner that is informed by how an archaeologist tackles her pre-historic findings. The line between "analytic" and "continental" philosophy is not always as sharp as is sometimes thought.

What could be called idealistic tendencies that emphasize the mind-dependence of what we take to be reality also play a major role in what is called here, perhaps somewhat uncomfortably, Wittgenstein's social empiricism. What is meant by this term is the view that he discusses repeatedly in *On Certainty* that the respective *Weltbilder* are constituted by what is revealed through or becomes manifest in what is accepted in a given social context as empirical evidence on which a knowledge-claim is based. Such a position is a version of empiricism because it gives precedence to experience as a source of evidence. It is a social empiricism in that it takes what counts

as empirical evidence to be a social phenomenon, and it expresses an idealistic sentiment since it conceives of social constellations as being dependent on decisions, habits, and other mental attitudes of individuals or groups of individuals. In other words, what is meant by social empiricism here is a view operating on the assumption that a *Weltbild*, a picture of the world, is a social construction that is reflected in the attitude of individuals toward what they agree to acknowledge as empirical evidence or as reasons. Wittgenstein arrives at this view by reconsidering the question about the alleged grounding function of empirical evidence in the process of the justification of knowledge-claims.

An attempt to reconstruct his reflections on this topic can start from two assumptions that he endorses, first that a knowledge-claim apparently needs to be defended or justified by giving reasons (cf. e.g., §§350, 438, 441, 563 *passim*), and second that what counts as a reason depends on the context provided by the *Weltbild* (cf. e.g., §§465–8, 482–5, 516). With these two assumptions in the background Wittgenstein tries to find out to what degree and in what sense empirical evidence or experience has justifying power and hence can function as a reason (cf. §§83f., 519). He distinguishes between two kinds of empirical evidence expressed in empirical propositions (*Erfahrungssätze*), those that can and those that cannot be doubted (cf. §§96f., 136, 167, 213). Interestingly, he wants the distinction between what can and what cannot be doubted to be drawn within the realm of what can count as empirical evidence (cf. §§574f.). This suggests that he does not think of this division primarily, if at all, as a criterion in order to distinguish between empirical and, for example, a priori or logical and mathematical propositions. As to empirical propositions, it seems to be obvious that in principle every knowledge-claim that is based on empirical evidence and thus appeals to experience can be doubted. Yet Wittgenstein denies this view on the basis of an examination of normal practices for justifying knowledge-claims. According to him, in a normal process of justification the challenge expressed by a doubt will be met by referring to another piece of empirical evidence that can function as a reason for holding the claim in question. This asking for and giving reasons can go on for quite some time. However, at some point or other this game will come to an end because the defender of the knowledge-claim will refuse to give further corroborating reasons. (In Collingwood's terms, asking and answering questions comes to a stop at the level of absolute presuppositions.) Instead, they will declare something like: "if I were to allow a doubt against this particular piece of empirical evidence I brought forward just now then for me nothing would be certain anymore,

I would have to put my entire system of beliefs into question. This piece of evidence is for me beyond doubt and I hold fast to it under all circumstances" (cf. e.g., §§69–75, 245–8, 279). It is at this point in the process of defending a knowledge-claim against skeptical doubts that the knower singles out an item of empirical evidence that cannot be doubted because she is not willing or prepared to do so. Hence there are empirical propositions that are taken to be certain although there is no justifying reason available to the person who relies on them (cf. §§111f., 401). The sum total of these indisputable propositions make up the *Weltbild* of a person, the background against which everything else is affirmed or denied (cf. §§105, 514).

The outcome of Wittgenstein's analysis of this process is not just the obvious contention that each holder of a knowledge-claim, each individual knower, is equipped with a collection of empirical propositions that for her individually are indubitable pieces of empirical evidence, or that each person has their own private *Weltbild*. His main objective seems to have been more ambitious and leads again to the question of the constitution of *Weltbilder*. From what has been outlined so far, it is safe to say that each individual lives within a personal *Weltbild* that functions as the foundation of her knowledge-claims. Wittgenstein complements this finding with suggestions about the motives a person might have for sticking to certain propositions unconditionally. His remarks on this point hint at an attempt to integrate social aspects into his views on *Weltbild*-constitution. He very likely holds that only those propositions are convincing candidates for incontestable beliefs of a person and hence indicative of their *Weltbild* that she considers to be shared by and with others (cf. §§144, 280ff.).

This stance fits well into Wittgenstein's general outlook regarding the interplay between a *Weltbild* and a knowledge-claim. He seems to reckon that for an ordinary knowledge-claim to become controversial there always has to be some community or other in which the claim is put forward (cf. §298). Otherwise it could not be challenged. Thus the task of defending a claim by relying on empirical evidence expressed in empirical propositions already appeals to social constellations. Furthermore, for a person even to assume of an empirical proposition that it cannot but be true presupposes that there is a publicly accessible source for this conviction. A person who sticks unconditionally to some conviction or other must be prepared to answer questions about the origin and the source of this conviction not just to others but also to herself. She might point to a teacher, to something she has read in a scientific book, or even to God as a source that for her

guarantees the faithfulness of the proposition in question. This means that in a situation in which recourse to indubitable propositions is involved a communal aspect is present right from the outset. The communities that play a role in these examinations function as appropriate providers of shared pictures of the world by establishing the framework within which what can be doubted and what not has to be settled (cf. §361). These communities vary according to circumstances. In mathematical contexts the relevant community is presumably the community of mathematicians, in scientific contexts the scientific community, and in matters of religion the community of religious people (although of course the last of these communities is typically more fractured than the former, or consists of multiple communities rather than a single one). These communities demarcate domains within which a sensible discourse is to be established by somehow providing criteria about what is reasonable or not in a given social context (cf. §336). However, they are not rigid frameworks that are carved in stone. They can and will vary internally because they are subject to change (cf. §256). What the community of, for example, astronomers is currently committed to, that is, what its members share as their astronomical *Weltbild* at the present point in time, is different from what they shared in the Ptolemaic era. The same is true of all other communities. In the end, they all provide pictures of the world that are open to modifications, adjustments, and even amendments, depending on what their members are willing to accept as empirical evidence (cf. §378).

This assessment has far-reaching and radical consequences, for it leads to a view according to which empirical evidence and experience turn out to be social phenomena (cf. §144) that are based on a shared picture of the world. The view endorsed is that there is just shared experience of and in a shared world, and only within the parameters of what can be shared do questions concerning knowledge and reality make sense. For an idealist this outcome might confirm the mindedness of reality, although the mind envisioned here is not the individual mind but a social universal that finds its expression in a multitude of ever-changing communities (what Croce called spirit, although he thought that Hegel meant something more by that term). For a realist, this result might be acceptable either because it seems to acknowledge the independence of reality from any acts of individual knowers although the independence appealed to here is not meant to implicitly grant priority to matter over mind. It is in virtue of this tolerance toward both interpretations, the idealistic and the realistic one, that Wittgenstein's position can rightly be regarded as trying to establish a point of view that goes beyond

traditional dualisms in metaphysics. But that is what many others who were willing to call themselves idealists in some sense, for example, "critical idealists," had been doing since the time of Neo-Kantianism, if not since the period of so-called German Idealism itself.

A way of tackling problems in epistemology and metaphysics that can also be seen as having idealistic undertones has been pursued especially in the American philosophical scene in the second half of the twentieth century. Prominent representatives of these new approaches include Wilfrid Sellars and John McDowell. They come to mind most readily because they explicitly connect their theories with elements of what they take to be philosophical messages and insights of major positions in classical German philosophy, especially of Kant's epistemology (Sellars) and Hegel's metaphysics (McDowell). This does not mean that they deal with these classical views in a literal sense, although they have both done detailed interpretative work on Kant and/or Hegel. Rather, within their own philosophical projects they refer to these historical predecessors to a certain extent in order to pay homage to the influence of Kant's and Hegel's ideas on their own themes and topics.

At first sight it may seem far-fetched to detect idealist motives in the philosophical work of Sellars. In his "Autobiographical Reflections" he states as his goal in philosophy "to formulate a scientifically oriented, naturalistic realism which would 'save the appearances'" (289), a statement that led his one-time student Willem deVries to "call his philosophy of science a 'pragmatic realism' because he insists on our commitment to the reality of the *objects* to be posited by Peircean ideal science, while explicating most of the *structural* features of science in terms of the pragmatic force of their linguistic expression" (deVries 2021). Talk about realism, whether naturalistic or pragmatic, seems antithetical to idealistic tendencies. However, when we take into account the results and implications of Sellars's famous criticism of what he calls the "Myth of the Given" and his equally renowned distinction between what he calls the manifest and the scientific image of man-in-the-world a different picture emerges, a picture that can indeed raise idealistic sentiments, especially if one keeps in mind what was emphasized in the foregoing chapters that since the days of Kant and Hegel the priority of the conceptual has become a distinguishing mark of positions that can be considered idealist at least epistemologically if not metaphysically.

The topic of the priority of the conceptual over and against the non-conceptual in contexts in which knowledge-claims are at stake plays a central role in Sellars's discussion of the shortcomings of sense-datum

theories elaborated in his celebrated essay "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" (originally published in 1956, here cited in the 1997 book version edited by Robert Brandom). Sense-datum theories are of interest for him not for their own sake but as examples of a certain type of empiricist philosophy based on the belief that knowledge is founded in something that is immediately or non-inferentially given. Thus the main object of Sellars's attack is not to point to inconsistencies or other defects connected with sense-datum discourse alone, rather he is concerned with what he takes to be a fundamental mistake of all traditional empiricist theories, namely falling victim in one way or the other to "the Myth of the Given" when it comes to the foundation of knowledge. He characterizes this myth as follows:

> The idea that observation "strictly and properly so-called" is constituted by certain self-authenticating nonverbal episodes, the authority of which is transmitted to verbal and quasi-verbal performances when these performances are made "in conformity with the semantical rules of the language" is . . . the heart of the Myth of the Given. For the *given*, in epistemological tradition, is what is *taken* by these self-authenticating episodes. These "takings" are, so to speak, the unmoved movers of empirical knowledge, the "knowings in presence" which are presupposed by all other knowledge, both the knowledge of general truths and the knowledge "in absence" of other particular matters of fact. Such is the framework in which traditional empiricism makes its characteristic claim that the perceptually given is the foundation of empirical knowledge. (Sellars 1997 §38)

Sellars rejects this framework by insisting that epistemic facts like empirical knowledge-claims cannot be "analyzed without remainder" (§5) into non-epistemic facts consisting of inner episodes of sensations and impressions that can have a founding function. This is by no means meant to imply that he rejects the idea of a foundation of knowledge *tout court*. On the contrary, empirical knowledge claims are in one way or another causally related to what is "out there" (cf. Sellars 1997: §29), thus having their roots in a subject-independent reality. What has to be given up is, according to Sellars, the misguided belief that "the fundamental associative tie between language and the world must be between words and 'immediate experiences'" (ibid.) in the form of inner episodes. Sellars sketches out how this belief comes about by providing a mythological story of a prehistoric philosophical ancestor named Jones who somehow manages to develop the idea of inner episodes out of an original interpretation of "intelligent

nonhabitual behavior" of others (Sellars 1997: §56, cf. §46), an interpretation that leads to the concept of immediate experience. According to Sellars, it is along the lines of such a story that one can understand how the ill-advised talk about the foundation of empirical knowledge in immediate experience became part of the philosophical agenda. Instead of focusing on questions of foundations we are, in Sellars's eyes, better advised to think of empirical knowledge as "a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy, though not *all* at once" (Sellars 1997: §38). In short, it is easy to see that Sellars's attack on the Myth of the Given is compatible with an epistemological version of idealism, especially in its Kantian guise. Sellars's view was clearly inspired by Peirce as well as by Kant, but it has affinities with the views we have found in Collingwood and Wittgenstein as well (whether or not he would have liked these comparisons).

Sellars's critical stance against an empiricist conception of the Given is not the only aspect of his position that could be read as sympathetic to the spirit although not necessarily the letter of idealism. However, it is not just epistemologically motivated idealism with respect to the foundations of knowledge that comes to mind when we look at Sellars's philosophical views. What deVries calls his "pragmatic realism" could also be seen as open to ways of thinking that can be encountered in versions of traditional metaphysical idealism of the Anglo-American kind of the late nineteenth century, paradigmatically represented by Peirce. It is in this metaphysical context that Sellars starts to deviate from an epistemological project that can be framed in Kantian terms and to move toward an endorsement of a view of the nature of reality that seems to be closer to Hegel's metaphysical outlook. Whereas Kant not only refrained from any speculation about the ultimate constitution of reality but positively denied our ability to find out what reality is in itself (or did so at least in the theoretical context if not, as we saw, in his practical philosophy), Sellars follows Hegel's lead and ventures an account of what reality proper consists in. He transforms Hegel's belief in the logical-conceptual constitution of reality into a less pretentious-sounding view according to which "science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not" (Sellars 1997: §42), a statement meant to echo the *homo-mensura* dictum of Protagoras, "man is the measure of all things." The guiding idea seems to be that since science is the most reliable way of describing and explaining reality, the categories and concepts that science makes available are the only candidates that we will have for an assessment of the nature of things. That is, for lack of a reasonable alternative we cannot but accept as ultimately real what the

science of our time tells us. However, Sellars, contrary to Hegel but like other figures we have considered beginning with the Neo-Kantians, does not believe in a static and unchangeable set of reality-constituting concepts and categories. For him science is embedded in an ever-changing historical process in the course of which new categories and concepts turn up. Hence at any specific point in history reality is revealed in new conceptual clothes. But—and this is indeed reminiscent of Hegel—the so to speak metaphysical fact remains that what there is is ultimately constituted by variable and time-dependent concepts and categories. In the case of Hegel they have their roots in purely conceptual requirements, in the case of Sellars they are the result of scientific research where science is understood as an ensemble of social practices.

Another much discussed attempt that could be read as integrating idealistic motives into an account of the possibility of empirical knowledge, an attempt that also hopes to overcome the opposition between idealism and several forms of realism, is outlined by John McDowell in his influential book *Mind and World*, which first appeared in 1994. McDowell sets up his approach to the problem of empirical knowledge within a framework that goes back to Kant in both terminology and substance: Empirical knowledge-claims based on experience have to be seen as the joint product of the faculties of sensibility and the understanding. Sensibility is a passive faculty that is responsible for receptivity, that is, for the ability of the knower to receive data passively from a subject-independent "outside" reality. The understanding is an active faculty that is rooted in the spontaneity of the knower and provides conceptual structures on the basis of which these data from the outside are transformed into empirical judgments. McDowell stresses that he follows Kant (1) in calling these abilities receptivity and spontaneity respectively, (2) in attributing them to the faculties of sensibility and the understanding, and (3) in taking them to be conditions of experience and empirical knowledge. With these Kantian tools in place he can formulate his leading question: how to establish a theory of empirical knowledge that accepts this Kantian analysis and that at the same time can avoid the deficiencies that are connected with what he takes to be two palpable although misleading attempts to respond to Kant's claim about the nature of empirical knowledge? The first is the attempt to conceive of the data received from "outside" reality via receptivity as something that is non-conceptually given. According to McDowell, this maneuver gives rise to the problems that were outlined by Sellars in his criticism of the Myth of the Given. The second tactic is to deny that in the case of knowledge there is

room for anything non-conceptual, hence any room for non-conceptual data. This line leads to what McDowell calls "coherentism," a stance he associates with a position held by Donald Davidson. Coherentism "does not acknowledge an external rational constraint on thinking" (1994: 46), it leads to "a frictionless spinning in a void" (1994: 66) and hence does not allow outside reality to show up in the shape of something purely, that is, non-conceptually given and to play a role in processes of gaining and justifying empirical knowledge.

McDowell aims at a position that does not fall victim to either the shortcomings of Sellars's Myth of the Given or the problems connected with an equally dissatisfying Davidsonian coherentism. He starts by stipulating (1) that empirical knowledge consists in conceptually articulating "that things are thus and so" (1994: 26), (2) that empirical knowledge is based on experience, (3) that in experience the operations of receptivity and spontaneity are somehow related, and (4) that in epistemology the split between the non-conceptual and the conceptual makes no sense and thus cannot be used to characterize the respective achievements of receptivity and spontaneity. On the basis of these premises he wants to convince us that the only way to avoid the confusions connected with the idea of a non-conceptual given on the one hand and with conceptual coherentism on the other and yet to stay within a broadly Kantian framework is by overcoming the aporetic oppositions between receptivity and spontaneity, sensibility and understanding, the non-conceptual and the conceptual by providing a model according to which *in the context of knowledge* these oppositions break down. Instead of accepting an irreconcilable split between receptivity and spontaneity and anchoring the non-conceptual at the side of sensibility while putting the conceptual exclusively on the side of the understanding, and then denying that it is possible to provide a reasonable link between them, McDowell suggests something else. On his view, what we experience as the (passive) receptivity of sensibility is already permeated with conceptual elements stemming from the spontaneity of the understanding. In his words, "we must insist that the understanding is already inextricably implicated in the deliverances of sensibility themselves. Experiences are impressions made by the world on our senses, products of receptivity; but those impressions themselves already have conceptual content" (1994: 46). Or again, "having things appear to one a certain way is already itself a mode of actual operation of conceptual capacities" (1994: 62). In short, receptivity and spontaneity are already inseparably linked right from the beginning of the cognitive process.

McDowell is perfectly well aware that his suggestion might easily invoke the charge of idealism, "in the sense in which to call a position 'idealism' is to protest that it does not genuinely acknowledge how reality is independent of our thinking" (1994: 26)—not a metaphysical insistence that reality is ultimately mental, but the epistemological position that we can never know reality except as it appears to us. The reasoning behind this worry might be outlined thus: if conceptual activities are rooted in the spontaneity of the understanding then they must be considered as subjective contributions of the cognizing subject, contributions that are independent of the world. This leaves both "outside" and "inside" reality, like Kant's "outer" and "inner" senses, a conceptual construct of some mind or other, and this is exactly the way the idealist wants us to think of the world. However, in McDowell's eyes this charge is misguided in his case because he has a story to tell as to why conceptual content is already present in the deliverances of passive experiences, that is, in the impressions from an outside and subject-independent world, a story that does allow conceptual content to be part of how the world impinges on us.

McDowell's account turns around our understanding of the concept of nature. According to him there are two ways of thinking about nature that are both deeply rooted in the history of Western philosophy. The first is the distinctively modern view that tries to make nature intelligible as an object governed by natural laws. This modern stance is realized by relying on the tools and methods provided by natural science. From this perspective, one is committed to the assumption that receptivity is a natural capacity whose deliverances are determined by natural laws. This means that it becomes impossible to integrate conceptual spontaneity into nature. After all, conceptual spontaneity as a capacity *sui generis* is supposed to be non-natural, that is, to be independent from natural receptivity. The second way of thinking about nature goes back to "a common medieval outlook" (1994: 71) according to which the intelligibility of nature depends on the degree to which human beings can make sense of and see meaning in nature by relying on what we experience. The attitude here is to look at nature "as if all of nature were a book of lessons for us" (ibid.). Nature thus conceived presents itself to us as something that is not alien to knowledge but is structured in a meaningful way that is expressed in conceptual relations, relations whose actual presence is documented in what human beings experience, namely that "that things are thus and so." In order to highlight the contrast that he wants to emphasize McDowell alludes to Max Weber's metaphorical distinction between enchanted and disenchanted nature

(cf. 1994: 70). Whereas in a scientific, "disenchanted" view of nature a stone, for example, is just a piece of matter that is subject to the laws of physics, and this alone makes it a part of nature, this very same natural stone might be experienced by a human being as a gravestone or a cenotaph, that is, as a part of an "enchanted" nature that is filled with conceptual elements and connotations. This "other" or "richer" concept of nature does not necessarily conflict with the concept of nature understood in the scientific sense. It just allows us to amplify or to enrich the concept of what is natural in such a way that conceptual elements are included and at the same time to hold fast to the (Kantian) claim that conceptual spontaneity is a capacity *sui generis* (cf. 1994: 108f.). The Neo-Kantian background of Weber's distinction, as a version of the distinction between the natural and the cultural sciences, should be obvious; Weber was a student of Heinrich Rickert. So McDowell too stands in the shadow of Neo-Kantianism.

Against the background of the two connotations connected with the concept of nature, McDowell's problem is to find a way of reconciling non-natural conceptual spontaneity with receptivity's natural passivity, a way that permits conceptuality to remain a capacity *sui generis* that operates autonomously and independently of receptivity while at the same time integrating it into a subject-independent nature. McDowell's solution leads to a position that he calls "naturalism of second nature" or "naturalized Platonism" (1994: 91). According to this kind of naturalism, it makes no sense to look at the capacities of (sensuous) receptivity and of (conceptual) spontaneity in isolation and then to ask how their respective achievements can be brought together in order to yield knowledge of empirical objects. Instead, in the case of empirical knowledge receptivity is informed from the outset by conceptual elements stemming from spontaneity and at the same time conceptual activities are disciplined from the outset by the deliveries of the senses, that is, by receptivity. In order to establish this reciprocity, which is constitutive of McDowell's naturalism, he wants us to start by realizing that epistemic subjects are first of all participants in cultural and social processes that provide the subject-independent conceptual means without which even the most basic (passive) experiences would have no recognizable content. These means are part of the natural development of human subjects of knowledge, a development in the course of which we acquire the conceptual means mandatory for successfully dealing with the phenomena that we experience. The sum total of these natural processes, which, according to McDowell, form the character of a person, he characterizes with the German word *Bildung*, a term that has the connotations of "education" (*Ausbildung*)

and "forming" (*Herausbildung*) as well. *Bildung*, a term popularized by the post-Kantian statesman and educator Wilhelm von Humboldt, consists in being socially initiated into the right use of conceptual capacities "which include responsiveness to . . . rational demands" (1994: 84) when it comes to experience. By being immersed in and as the result of these processes, humans acquire what McDowell calls in allusion to Aristotle a "second nature" (ibid.). This term is meant to capture the idea that it belongs to the nature of human beings to relate to whatever they passively experience via receptivity in a way that is already conceptually informed. If conceptuality is conceived of as integrated into receptivity in this manner, the traditional but problematic dualism in philosophy between spontaneity and receptivity, conceptual activities and passive experiences can be overcome or, perhaps more accurately, undercut. McDowell summarizes thus: "We can conceive exercises of capacities that belong to spontaneity," that is, conceptual activities, "as elements that belong to the course of life," that is, as natural events. "An experiencing and acting subject is a living thing, with active and passive bodily powers that are genuinely her own; she is herself embodied, substantially present in the world that she experiences and acts on. This is a framework for reflection that really stands a chance of making traditional philosophy obsolete" (1994: 111) and of thereby contributing to overcome its inherent deficiencies.

Obviously McDowell's "naturalism of second nature" has nothing to do with traditional idealism as metaphysics. That is based on accepting the mind–body dichotomy, which in turn leads to mind–matter dualism, a dualism without which the need to make a metaphysical choice between idealistic and materialistic ontologies could not have come about. On the contrary, McDowell's position is unequivocally directed against an idealism that is conceived of as standing in opposition to realism or materialism. However, the very idea of making conceptuality part of nature by thinking of conceptual capacities as natural products that are shaped and determined by social and cultural processes might be read as pointing to what could be called an "idealism of second nature." According to this reading, for epistemological reasons we already have to assume that cognitive "openness to reality" (1994: 111ff.), openness to what is "out there," is made possible by imposing on reality a conceptual structure that people in the course of their social and cultural development have acquired and that guides or determines their experiences. In other words, if there were no conceptual structure that could be either imposed on or extracted from the world, there could be no knowledge of anything that is part of reality. McDowell's

naturalism would be distinguished from Kant's transcendental idealism only by denying Kant's distinction between things in themselves and our subjective forms of intuition and by replacing both with developmental processes that take place in nature (reminiscent of Cohen's and Cassirer's functions). Then McDowell's naturalism of second nature becomes an epistemological form of idealism, or at least reproduces the epistemological motivation for idealism.

Depending on how one conceives of the conceptual elements that a person acquires in order to be cognitively open to reality, one might even be tempted to bring McDowell's naturalism into close connection to a metaphysical idealism à la Hegel according to which reality is nothing but an expression or a manifestation of a conceptual structure. On this interpretation, a person's conceptual openness to reality is not just founded on practices stemming from social interactions in a cultural environment that lead to the imposition of conceptual structures on reality. Instead, these structures would be conceived of as the result of a socially initiated learning process that reveals the conceptual elements constitutive of reality as such. Thus it would be reality itself that discloses its constitutive conceptual structure by divulging the adequate set of concepts and categories to a person via a socially mediated learning process. Read this way, a version of metaphysical idealism would lurk in the background of McDowell's second nature-naturalism. Whether he is indeed tacitly going in this direction is hard to tell. At one point he remarks as to the relation of Kant and Hegel: "…I have described a philosophical project: to stand on the shoulders of the giant, Kant, and see our way to the supersession of traditional philosophy that he almost managed, but not quite. The philosopher whose achievement that description best fits is someone we take almost no notice of, in the philosophical tradition I was brought up in,…: namely, Hegel" (1994: 111). This could be read as bringing Hegel back into the picture of how an idealism naturalized by second nature might look, a picture that would reward metaphysical idealism with a second chance in epistemological and metaphysical discussions yet to come in the twenty-first century.

11
Conclusion

This is a short book, and we have not been completely sparing of judgment along the way. So there should not be any need for an extensive summary of what we have said nor for an extended evaluation of the views we have discussed. But some concluding words might not be amiss.

The legacy of idealism in modern philosophy is ambivalent. On the one hand, the metaphysical thesis of idealism proper as we have defined it, namely that reality is ultimately mental in character, in the end does not seem very promising: We do not have a clear enough idea about what the mental ultimately is, nor about how it could subsist entirely on its own, to make such a reduction either adequately informative or adequately plausible. The everlasting obscurity of the idea of the mental is well documented in the foregoing pages. The shift from God in Berkeley to the Concept in Hegel to the Absolute in Schelling, Bradley, and Royce as paradigms or instantiations of the mental bears witness to this. Yet the same could also be said about physicalism: We do not have a clear enough idea about what the physical ultimately is, nor about how it could ground, cause, or explain the undeniable fact of our own consciousness, to speak of nothing else, to make a physicalist reductionism of the mental any more informative or plausible than a mentalistic reduction of the physical. This can easily be illustrated from the case of the recent discovery of the Higgs boson particle. Physicists, or at least science journalists, celebrated this as solving the mystery of matter, namely what binds particles together: namely, another particle. Philosophers, taught by Kant to use the "skeptical method" even if they need not end up as skeptics (see "The Discipline of Pure Reason," *CPuR* A 738–57/B 766–85), are paid to doubt assertions like this, and there are obvious problems with the claim: First, what does it really mean to call something a "particle" that is supposed to exist only for a tiny fraction of a second—why not just call it a moment in a process? Second, how can a particle be the ultimate answer to what holds particles together? In antiquity, Plato's theory of forms met with what is called the "Third Man" objection—actually, Plato raised it himself. Namely, if an ordinary particular object is what it is because it resembles a form—a particular human being is one

Idealism in Modern Philosophy. Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Oxford University Press.
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because it resembles the Form of the Human, a bed because it resembles the Form of the Bed—don't we need yet another form, the Form of Resemblance, to see that the particular resembles the first form? And then yet another Form of Resemblance to see that this second case of resemblance is in fact a case of resemblance? And so on. Be that as it may, and however compelling you might think the theory of the Higgs boson particle is, philosophers should properly be wary of claims to have discovered the ultimate nature of reality. The problem is not so much with either the mental or the physical as it is with the claim to know how things ultimately are. This is another lesson we should have learned from Kant. The result of his Antinomy of Pure Reason is that while it is the nature of human reason to seek the "unconditioned," that which needs no further explanation or ground, and that idea—Idea of Pure Reason, as he calls it—may have an indispensable use in practical philosophy, where we must regard the moral law as unconditionally valid, binding us even when we would vehemently prefer otherwise, it has no use within the theoretical sphere: whatever might seem the most fundamental level of explanation in our currently best scientific theories might itself be further explained, at some point and in some way that we cannot even currently even imagine. Science, and by this we mean all well-founded, or not yet refuted, claims to knowledge, is never more than our currently best explanation, and it is sheer intellectual effrontery to claim more than that.

On the other hand, there seems to be something profoundly right, even inescapable, about at least the epistemological argument for idealism: Of course we experience the world from the human point of view, and must perceive and conceive it through our own faculties of perception and conception. In a way, this is just a tautology: Our experience is after all our experience, or, as Kant once again put it, the conditions of the possibility of our experience are the conditions of the possibility of the objects of our experience. Objects in the most general sense are what we experience, so of course they are as we experience them. How else could we experience them? Indeed, even when we scientifically and experimentally investigate the perceptual and cognitive systems of organisms other than *homo sapiens*, when we discover that dogs can hear acoustic frequencies that we cannot, that insects with their multi-lensed eyes or arachnids with their more than two eyes must perceive the world differently than we do, we still have to interpret their experience in terms of our own—we cannot simply have their experience, though we try to imagine it from our point of view. To be sure, Kant's philosophy was not confined to this triviality: he took the crucial step

of understanding our experience through the *activity* of judgment, and subsequent idealists such as Fichte and Hegel tried to deepen Kant's insight by conceiving of the mental as activity as such. The approaches of the latter may be assessed either positively or negatively. The negative assessment would be that they made a fundamental mistake: They ran afoul of the problem of ultimate explanations, so perhaps they would have been better off to let Kant's warning about the unknowability of things in themselves stay in place, and contented themselves with furthering and improving his account of what our mental—cognitive, practical, emotional, aesthetic—activity is actually like. Or, on a positive note, the German idealists can be praised for having explored the metaphysical consequences of not subjecting themselves to Kant's metaphysical humility. Instead they relied in a radical way on what Kant too considered the root of what the world can be for us, namely a construction. However, whereas for Kant this construction was based on the essential contributions of both intuitions and thoughts of human subjects, the subsequent idealists focused on the essential contribution of pure thinking alone, thus making conceptuality a metaphysical topic.

Our conclusion should not seem novel. On the one hand, the rejection of metaphysics altogether was the underlying premise, whether stated or not, of much of the best twentieth-century philosophy. Take phenomenology as pioneered by Edmund Husserl, for example, about which we have said little: Husserl's first move was to "bracket" ontological or ultimate metaphysical questions altogether and to focus on describing the structure of our thought—"noesis" in his peculiar diction—and the objects of thought as we think about them—"noemata." Or take perhaps the most interesting of his successors, Maurice Merleau-Ponty: for him the description of human experience comes first, science is practiced within the confines of human experience, and can hardly undermine its reality, and ultimate, metaphysical questions do not even need to be mentioned. Or take some moments in the history of analytic philosophy: after A. J. Ayer and other "logical positivists" inspired by the Vienna Circle in the 1930s had declared metaphysical assertions meaningless nonsense because there is no way to verify them, that is, by appeal to our own experience, subsequent movements in analytic philosophy, such as the "ordinary language" philosophy of J. L. Austin, could simply leave further discussion of metaphysics aside and instead describe the structure of human experience, both thought and practice, by describing the structure of the language through which we talk about it. All of these approaches can be described under the general rubric that we have used here to describe the historical movement of Neo-Kantianism: idealist

epistemology without idealism, that is, without idealist metaphysics. On the other hand, many recent philosophers have been more receptive to calling their work "ontology" and "metaphysics," but they are still in the business of trying to uncover how the essential features of human thought, especially of conceptualization and judgment, structure our experience of reality.

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